

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Aylesbury Training Group**

**28 April 2006**



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
- **learn**direct 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
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**).

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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## **Aylesbury Training Group**

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Aylesbury Training Group (ATG), which is a registered charity, was established in 1967 to provide first-year training for engineering apprentices. A chief executive, appointed by a board of directors, manages the company which is based on four sites with two main sites in Aylesbury. ATG's head office, in Aylesbury, is located in its technical training centre, which accommodates the engineering foundation programmes, information technology (IT) courses and a cycle maintenance programme. The business centre, situated a short distance from the head office, accommodates the business administration, customer service and health care training programmes. ATG has a dedicated key skills/learning support unit in each training centre. In 2005, ATG absorbed the work-based learning arm of a chamber of commerce and now has an office in Slough. The company also has a second centre for cycle maintenance based in the north of England.

2. ATG is the largest work-based learning provider funded by Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Learning and Skills Council. The company employs 62 full-time and 23 part-time staff. ATG has 878 learners registered on its apprenticeship programmes and delivers programmes in engineering and manufacturing technologies, information and communications technology (ICT), business administration and law, retail and commercial enterprise and health, public services care, and animal care. Eighty-seven per cent of the learners are employed and the remaining learners are in the technical training centre in Aylesbury. ATG is a centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) for cycle maintenance and is also the lead partner in an engineering CoVE consortium of a college, a training provider and two large employers.

### OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

**Grade 3**

3. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** The provision in health, public services and care is good. The provision in engineering and manufacturing technologies, and business administration and law is satisfactory. ATG's leadership and management are good, as are the arrangements for quality improvement. The arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory.

4. **The inspection team was broadly confident in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The self-assessment report is prepared by the quality improvement planning team which comprises representatives from all departments within the company. Feedback from employers and learners is used in the self-assessment process. It is thorough and improvements are made within the organisation from the feedback. The self-assessment report has identified most of the strengths and weakness identified by inspectors, but many satisfactory aspects of the provision were identified as strengths or weaknesses.

5. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements.** The inspection in 2002 found some unsatisfactory provision. The reinspection in 2003 and the quality monitoring visit identified improvements in the provision so that overall the provision was satisfactory. ATG continues to improve, especially with regard to retention

and achievement.

## KEY CHALLENGES FOR AYLESBURY TRAINING GROUP:

- continue to improve retention and achievement rates
- maintain the good support for staff and learners
- ensure effective promotion of equality of opportunity for all learners
- ensure a consistent and effective approach to initial assessment
- continue to develop the sharing of good practice

## GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

<b>Leadership and management</b>		<b>2</b>
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		2

<b>Health, public services and care</b>			<b>2</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<b><i>Social care</i></b>			
Apprenticeships for young people	38	2	
<b><i>Early years</i></b>			
Apprenticeships for young people	79	2	

<b>Engineering and manufacturing technologies</b>			<b>3</b>
<b>Contributory areas:</b>	<b>Number of learners</b>	<b>Contributory grade</b>	
<b><i>Engineering</i></b>			
Apprenticeships for young people	152	3	
NVQ training for young people	4	3	
<b><i>Manufacturing technologies</i></b>			
Apprenticeships for young people	212	3	
Train to Gain	109	3	

Business administration and law		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Business management</b> Apprenticeships for young people	66	3
<b>Customer service</b> Apprenticeships for young people	55	3

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

6. The areas of learning which were inspected and graded were health, public services and care, engineering and manufacturing technologies and business administration and law. ICT was not inspected.

Number of inspectors	8
Number of inspection days	40
Number of learners interviewed	98
Number of staff interviewed	62
Number of employers interviewed	39
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	42

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievements and standards

7. In health, public services and care, achievement is satisfactory overall. There are strong trends identifying that this is improving. Achievement rates for apprentices are good. Learners make good progress towards their qualifications and their portfolios are of a high standard.

8. Retention and achievement rates in engineering and manufacturing technologies are satisfactory overall. Recent data shows significant trends in improvement. Learners currently on programme are at least making satisfactory progress.

9. Overall, learners' achievements are satisfactory in business administration and law. Success rates for customer service apprentices were good in 2004-05, but most success rates are in line with national averages. The retention rates for learners in the past two years are good. The standard of work being achieved by most learners is satisfactory. Portfolios are well organised and contain a good range of work-based evidence.

## The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	0	3	8	0	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>11</b>

10. **Good support for learners was identified in all areas of learning.** This is evidenced by regular, frequent formal visits as well as less formal contact by telephone, text messaging and e-mail. There are many examples of good pastoral support for individual learners. Good individual target-setting meets the needs of learners.

11. **Off-the-job training is good in health, public services and care, and engineering and manufacturing technologies.** Workshops are well planned with detailed lesson plans, clear learning outcomes and learning resources. The programmes are well organised and give flexible access to bicycle maintenance.

12. **Learners' work is of a good standard in health, public services and care.** There are good standards of work in portfolios. Practical work in engineering is good with some good pieces being produced.

13. **Working relationships between employers and ATG are good.** Employers appreciate and value the visits by ATG's staff and have a good understanding of the programmes. Some of the employers as well as ATG's own staff are enrolled on the bicycle maintenance course.

14. **Arrangements for key skills are poor in some areas of learning.** Some learners have not completed initial diagnostic assessments even though there are clear indications that they have additional learning needs. Learners are not always clear about what is expected of them or how they are going to collect the evidence.

15. **Some review practices in engineering and manufacturing technologies are poor.** Some comments are poorly worded and learners feel ill informed at times. Some poor behaviour is not being challenged.

16. **Equality of opportunity is poorly promoted to learners.** It is covered at induction but it is not followed up systematically in teaching sessions. Learners do not fully understand equality of opportunity.

## Leadership and management

17. **Strategic management at ATG is strong.** Clear direction is set by the chief executive and this is communicated to all staff through meetings at different levels and individual meetings on an operational level. The strategy is appropriately focused on retention and achievement.

18. **Staff are well supported at ATG.** A well-established staff appraisal system identifies continuing professional development needs and these are met through in-house and external training. Induction is thorough, as is the staff handbook. Target-setting is good for staff.



19. **ATG has very effective communication.** There is a comprehensive structure of meetings and these are all appropriately minuted. Action points are monitored from one meeting to the next. Management have an open door policy and all staff fully understand the corporate aims.

20. **Resources are managed well at ATG.** Workshops are well maintained and include good consumables which are donated by a national manufacturer. The new mezzanine within the main workshop area was designed and installed by ATG's staff.

21. **Strategies to widen participation are effective.** There are activities to recruit learners from under-represented groups, especially those who are difficult to engage in learning. Learners from minority ethnic groups and from both genders are well represented. Support is good for learners with additional learning needs.

22. ATG has an annual action plan for monitoring equal opportunities, **but there is no systematic monitoring of this plan.** Actions to be reviewed have not been signed off and even though equality of opportunity features on the senior management team agenda, there are no minutes to indicate any discussion.

23. **Management information is used well for decision-making and monitoring performance.** The management information system is good and is used innovatively to inform staff of progress against targets.

24. **Good procedures have been implemented to improve quality.** Retention and achievement rates have improved and trends indicate continuing improvement. The self-assessment process is thorough and self-assessment overall is satisfactory.

## Leadership and management

### Strengths

- strong strategic management
- good support for staff
- very effective internal communication
- good use of management information
- very effective quality improvement procedures
- good strategies to widen participation and recruit from under-represented groups

### Weaknesses

- insufficiently systematic monitoring of the action plan for equality of opportunity

## Health, public services and care

### Strengths

- good standard of learners' work and development of practical skills
- very good progress towards qualifications

## AYLESBURY TRAINING GROUP

- good off-the-job training for early years learners
- particularly effective support for learners
- good working relationships with employers

### *Weaknesses*

- poor arrangements for key skills for early years learners

## **Engineering and manufacturing technologies**

### *Strengths*

- good off-the-job training
- good support for learners
- flexible provision to meet the needs of learners and employers

### *Weaknesses*

- some poor review practices
- poor promotion of equality of opportunity with learners

## **Business administration and law**

### *Strengths*

- good retention rates
- good individual target-setting

### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy needs
- insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity with learners

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT AYLESBURY TRAINING GROUP:**

- relevant industrial experience of the staff
- being made to do new things
- helpful lecturers who treat you like an adult
- practical activities in the progression award workshop
- being paid travel expenses - 'it's a great help'
- 'weekly reviews for those of us working at the centre'
- 'freedom to do our own projects if we finish a unit early'
- 'approachable assessors who come to the workplace and give us individual support'
- 'getting a certificate so I can show what I can do'
- good equipment at the Aylesbury centre
- 'the fact that my portfolio is relevant to my job'
- 'it's easy to contact staff by telephone and e-mail'
- good systems and procedures
- flexible approach to gaining qualifications while working

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK AYLESBURY TRAINING GROUP COULD IMPROVE:**

- the range of programmes in electronics and motor vehicle maintenance
- programmes in more venues to reduce travelling
- the documents - they are out of date
- the equipment - it is not always working and available
- the number of visits to the workplace
- the website - 'it's difficult to read'
- the number of timetabled training events
- opportunities to meet other learners

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Grade 2**

#### Strengths

- strong strategic management
- good support for staff
- very effective internal communication
- good use of management information
- very effective quality improvement procedures
- good strategies to widen participation and recruit from under-represented groups

#### Weaknesses

- insufficiently systematic monitoring of the action plan for equality of opportunity

25. Strategic management at ATG is strong. Clear direction is set by the chief executive and is communicated to all staff at a briefing meeting every six months. The strategic plan sets out the vision, mission statement, corporate values, strategic aims and goals for a three-year period. The strategy is informed by market needs which are carefully researched and have identified some innovative courses such as the cycle maintenance provision. There are strategies for properties, staffing, and equipment, to meet the needs of school leavers and other young people in the community. The strategy is decided by the board at an annual 'away day' using the services of an external consultant. The strategy is concerned with the financial aspects of the provision as well as the retention and achievement rates. This has become the main focus recently and retention and achievement rates have improved across the whole provision. There is a well-formulated disaster recovery plan and a succession plan for all key staff. All aspects of the provision are covered by clearly stated policies and procedures.

26. Support for staff is good. The staff appraisal system is well established and very thorough and takes place every six months. Continuing professional development is given a high profile to maintain technical and teaching qualifications. A good range of training is available within the company, especially to meet the management needs of staff. Financial support is available for additional training as well as the time necessary to complete such training. Two staff are currently taking degree courses in their area of learning. A training needs analysis takes place to identify corporate needs and individual staff needs are identified through staff appraisal. Target-setting is good for staff and matches the experience of the individual member of staff. The staff handbook is comprehensive and induction is very thorough.

27. Internal communication is effective. There is a comprehensive meeting structure from board level to formal individual meetings. These meetings are all appropriately minuted and staff are linked to action points which are monitored. Management have an open-door policy and there is much informal communication. Staff are knowledgeable about the business and the day-to-day operational issues.

28. The management of literacy, numeracy and language support is satisfactory overall. The company has a strategy for the delivery of this support and an adequate range of resources to meet learners' needs. However, there are some weaknesses in areas of learning relating to initial assessment and in some aspects of its management.

29. Resources are managed well at ATG. The workshops are well equipped and well maintained. In particular, the cycle maintenance staff have been able to negotiate the supply of consumables from a leading manufacturer so that learners can work on the most up-to-date cycles. The staff designed and installed a mezzanine within the engineering workshop to provide additional classroom space.

30. The day-to-day operational management of training is effective. Problems are identified quickly and are readily resolved. The management structure allows for staffing problems to be covered. ATG is flexible enough to meet the needs of learners and is able to respond well to changing demands.

### Equality of opportunity

### Contributory grade 3

31. ATG has developed and continues to develop a good range of strategies to widen participation from under-represented groups. ATG promotes equality of opportunity through its strong set of values based on accepting learners who are difficult to engage in learning. ATG's staff provide a very supportive and welcoming environment that effectively meets learners' diverse needs. In health and social care, male learners were targeted and at the time of the inspection there are six men on programmes. Five of the men have recently completed level 2 apprenticeships and have progressed to level 3. In engineering there are 20 women on a pilot course, which is aimed at encouraging women into engineering. Representation from minority ethnic groups is high at 16 per cent, compared with a local population of 6 per cent. ATG successfully encourages employers to recruit learners with disabilities. Those learners receive very good support and generally achieve their targets. One partially sighted learner in health and social care has achieved the level 2 apprenticeship and has progressed to level 3. Learners who need language support are referred to the local authority where there is very good support available.

32. ATG has a comprehensive strategy for equality and diversity and satisfactory policies and related procedures. Procedures cover harassment and bullying, selection processes for staff and learners, training and development, young persons protection, disability, human rights, and monitoring and review processes. The strategy clearly identifies priorities and how ATG plans to meet them. The equal opportunities policy is reviewed annually. All learners are given an equality of opportunity pack at induction which includes the equal opportunities policy. There is a detailed complaints system which is effective in improving provision. The health and safety policy is in place and is monitored. Publicity materials are in the process of being improved to provide a stronger focus on equality and diversity.

33. Staff training in equal opportunities is satisfactory. Staff have had recent training relating to new legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the skills for life initiative. Skills for life is the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language.

34. Initial assessment is satisfactory. Most learners have an initial assessment to identify basic and key skills needs, but the system is not systematically applied across all areas of

learning. Support is provided in a variety of ways through assessors or a discrete key skills specialist.

35. ATG has an annual action plan for equal opportunities which is directly linked to the priorities identified in the equality and diversity strategy. However, there is no systematic monitoring of the action plan. Some actions have been signed off but it is not always clear when this took place. For other actions there is no information on progress. Many actions are supposed to be reviewed quarterly, but there is no evidence that this is happening. ATG had an equal opportunities focus group which met monthly up until April 2005. This group focused on specific issues, but when it amalgamated with the quality improvement group there was a greatly reduced emphasis on equality of opportunity. The senior management team meetings have equal opportunities as a standing agenda item, but in most of the meetings no issues are recorded and there is no evidence of the action plan being monitored. ATG analyses its data well to identify how different groups of learners are performing, but again there is no record of what takes place after the analysis.

### **Quality improvement**

### **Contributory grade 2**

36. Good use is made of management information to plan the strategy and monitor the performance of the provision. The management information system has been improved with additional software to enable a variety of analyses to be completed. The contracts manager produces a monthly report for the senior management team meeting, which contains the latest information on retention and achievement rates as well as the financial status of the company. More detailed information concerning new starts, early leavers and progress against projected targets is also available and is reviewed at these meetings.

37. Quality improvement procedures have been implemented and are proving to be effective. This is evident from the significant improvement in retention and achievement rates across all areas of learning. The quality management system defines the responsibilities of the managers, and the contract manager is responsible overall for quality improvement.

38. An expansive quality assurance manual contains all the policies and procedures, which are easily identifiable from a flow chart. Instruction manuals in each department set out the fine detail of the procedures to be followed and a timetable for completion. Once changes to the procedures are authorised, staff are instructed to download them from the computer system to ensure that all documents are current. There is a wide range of internal audits for courses, finance, health and safety, and administration. The quality improvement plan is monitored by the quality improvement planning team, which meets on a monthly basis.

39. Arrangements for internal verification and the observation of teaching and learning have recently been reviewed and are becoming more consistent across the company. There are still some differences in practice across the various departments. Internal verification procedures are satisfactory overall. Observations of teaching and learning contain detailed information and are graded before feedback is given to the tutor. The grades are collated and discussed at the quality improvement planning team meetings. Each department now has an observation of training schedule and observations are scheduled on each subject at least once every cycle. Service level agreements with subcontractors specify that observations take place on a similar basis. Initial assessment practice also varies across the company. Standardisation meetings take place in departments and company wide. Random checks are carried out to ensure that individual

learning plans and progress reviews are completed to a satisfactory level.

40. The self-assessment process is thorough and is carried out by the quality improvement team, which includes members of staff to represent each department. Self-assessment is a central part of ATG's management system and information is collected from staff, learners, and employers. The self-assessment report is reviewed regularly and is used as a live document. The last report was amended in February 2006. Most of the strengths and weaknesses identified during the inspection appeared in the self-assessment report, although many of the strengths were no more than normal practice.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Health, public services and care

### Grade 2

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Social care</i></b> Apprenticeships for young people	38	2
<b><i>Early years</i></b> Apprenticeships for young people	79	2

41. ATG offers apprenticeships in care and early years care and education, and the new award for children's care, learning and development. There are 117 learners in training, of whom 58 are working towards level 3 qualifications. Fifty-nine learners are working towards level 2 qualifications. All learners are employed in residential and nursing homes for older people, and young adults with learning difficulties, mental health units, nurseries and primary schools. Learners are mostly recruited through their employers, but some are referred by Connexions. Eight training officers carry out all assessment in the workplace and there are three internal verifiers. ATG and individual employers offer training to support the background knowledge element of the childcare qualification at level 2 and 3, and care at levels 2 and 3.

#### *Strengths*

- good standard of learners' work and development of practical skills
- very good progress towards qualifications
- good off-the-job training for early years learners
- particularly effective support for learners
- good working relationships with employers

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor arrangements for key skills for early years learners

### Achievement and standards

42. The standard of learners' work is good. Learners complete individual portfolios which are neat and well presented. They demonstrate good understanding of their work role and give reflective accounts of their practice. Most employers report an improvement in the standard of learners' work since starting their training. Learners have been given additional responsibility and promotion at work. Some of the care learners are team leaders and are responsible for carrying out the induction in the workplace for new staff. Many are key workers for a small group of children or older people. Some learners have improved their ICT skills and are able to e-mail queries and their written work to assessors.

43. Learners are making very good progress towards completion of their qualification. Some learners have completed their apprenticeship in less than seven months and are keen to progress. Most of the learners are well motivated with clear progression aims.



Many of the learners at level 2 have low prior achievements, but they make significant progress towards reaching their goals and fulfilling their potential.

44. Overall, achievement is good. Trends are rising for advanced apprentices. Eleven per cent of advanced apprentices who were recruited in 2002, completed the framework and a further 6 per cent are still in learning.

45. Achievement rates for apprentices are generally good. In 2002-03, 19 per cent of apprentices completed the framework, and since then achievements have improved significantly with 59 per cent of learners completing the framework in 2003-04.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	17	47	51	41	27
		timely	13	46	31	46	16
	2004-05	overall	20	40	47	20	21
		timely	19	0	28	0	12
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	23	52	43	22	17
		timely	23	22	18	13	6
	2004-05	overall	20	55	46	40	29
		timely	33	3	21	0	13
NVQ training for young	2003-04	overall	4	50	62	0	0
		timely	3	33	44	0	0
	2004-05	overall	7	71	59	0	0
		timely	5	20	40	0	0

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)).

## The quality of provision

46. ATG offers very good off-the-job training for early years learners. Workshops are well planned with detailed session plans, clear learning outcomes and good resources. Tutors demonstrate very good knowledge. Learners value the workshops as they help them gain a better and deeper understanding of some of the more complex issues related to working with young children. The workshops also enable them to meet with learners from different settings and to share good practice. The learners who cannot attend the workshops have the information taken to them by their assessor. Time is spent in the workplace going through an electronic presentation and the handouts. ATG offers monthly workshops for care learners, but attendance has been poor. Most care teaching takes place in the workplace with individuals or in small groups.

47. There is particularly good support for learners. Support offered by assessors is flexible and very effective. Learners have at least one visit each month with additional contact by telephone, text messaging and e-mails. Learners who want to complete their award quickly are well supported to succeed, and those who experience difficulties are offered more frequent visits. Learners value the practical support they receive. One assessor looked

after a learner's baby in her own home so that she could attend ATG to take the progression tests. Another lone-parent attributes her success at level 2 to the support from ATG's staff. Employers are very supportive of their learners. Most continue to pay learners when they attend additional training courses, some of which need 12 weeks of commitment from learners and employers. Many early years learners are given time during the working day to complete written work.

48. Reviews of progress are satisfactory and take place more frequently than the statutory requirements for training. Learners have their progress reviewed at monthly intervals. Most employers are fully participative in the reviews and contribute to learners' activities and performance at work and to their increase in self-confidence and initiative. Achievement of key skills and technical certificates is also reviewed. Assessors visit workplaces between reviews to support and maintain learners' motivation. Many carry out observations of the learners' work during these visits.

49. Initial assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy and language needs is satisfactory. A skills scan is used to identify the correct level of award according to learners' work role and experience. The provision of support for learners with additional needs is not clearly defined. ATG has a tutor who has the relevant qualifications to teach learners with additional needs. Learners who need minimal support for spelling and writing in English are allocated additional time with their assessors, but not all assessors are qualified to carry out this work.

50. Induction is satisfactory and memorable for most learners. After the induction, learners understand their programme and the requirements of the various components. When learners progress from apprenticeships to advanced apprenticeships, another skills scan is completed, to ensure that the learners' work role is appropriate for level 3 awards, and a new individual learning plan is agreed.

51. Assessment practice is satisfactory. Assessments are agreed between assessors and learners and are communicated to employers. Written plans are clear and learners have no doubt about what is expected of them. Assessors meet with learners at least every month for assessment and feedback. Observation of performance at work is started early in the programme. Satisfactory use is made of reflective accounts for assessment, but many learners describe frequently occurring activities that could easily be observed during planned assessment.

52. Information, advice and guidance is satisfactory. All learners are enrolled on a level of apprenticeship which is appropriate to their job role. Learners have a good understanding of career progression opportunities that are available after they achieve their award. If learners want to achieve qualifications other than the national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 2 they have the opportunity to continue to level 4 with ATG.

53. The arrangements for teaching and assessing key skills for early years learners are poor. Learners are aware that they need to complete communication and application of number key skills, but are not clear about what is expected of them or how they are going to collect the evidence. They have little knowledge of the portfolio requirements and do not know the dates for external tests.

## **Leadership and management**

54. ATG has established good working relationships with employers. Employers are particularly appreciative of the assessors' additional support visits. They regard these as good motivational visits and useful sources of information of learners' achievements. Employers are aware of the activities that learners need to practice for assessment. They arrange duty rotas and areas of work to give learners the opportunity to cover the full range of their NVQ.

55. Opportunities for continuing professional development are good. All staff are vocationally experienced and have, or are working towards, teaching qualifications. Six have completed their internal verifier award and all staff have upgraded their assessor awards. A new assessor was allocated a mentor, who was responsible for their induction into the company, and an experienced assessor to support them during assessor training. All assessors have attended in-house training for using witnesses and professional discussions. All staff are vocationally experienced and qualified, all have knowledge of current working practice and some continue to work part time in care settings. Resources for teaching in the centres and workplaces are satisfactory. There is a small library and a range of learning packs available to learners at the centre. However, learners are not always informed of these resources during induction.

56. Learners' understanding of health and safety in the workplace, for themselves and their clients, is satisfactory. In addition to the technical certificates, learners have completed their employer's induction to the workplace, including health and safety training.

57. Internal verification is satisfactory and meets awarding body standards. There is a well-structured system in place for internal verification. Evidence is submitted three times during the NVQ and clear feedback is given to the assessor. Assessors are observed at six monthly intervals by an internal verifier.

## Engineering and manufacturing technologies

## Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Engineering</b>		
Apprenticeships for young people	152	3
NVQ training for young people	4	3
<b>Manufacturing technologies</b>		
Apprenticeships for young people	212	3
Train to Gain	109	3

58. ATG delivers training in engineering, manufacturing and bicycle maintenance. At the time of inspection there are 156 learners working towards apprenticeships, advanced apprenticeships and NVQs. Of these, 76 are on programme-led pathways and apprenticeship frameworks, 76 are on advanced apprenticeships and four are on an NVQ-only programme.

59. Level 2 programmes in engineering and manufacturing take place at the Aylesbury centre with one day a week for delivery of the technical certificate. After completion of the level 2, learners are recruited into companies and continue training as advanced apprentices. The advanced apprenticeship programme is assessed in the workplace with the level 3 technical certificate mostly delivered at the Aylesbury centre. There are 16 staff in engineering who carry out a range of teaching, instructing, assessing and workplace reviews. These staff also include the head of engineering and ICT. There are four internal verifiers and a further two trainee internal verifiers.

60. There are 321 learners working towards apprenticeships and NVQs in bicycle maintenance. Of these 212 are under 24 years old. One hundred and seventy-seven are apprentices and 35 are on an NVQ at level 3 programme. There are 109 learners aged over 24 years, 83 working towards an NVQ at level 2 and 26 working towards an NVQ at level 3. These learners are funded by the Train to Gain programme through the national employment service.

61. About half of the apprentices on bicycle maintenance programmes attend the Aylesbury centre for four one-week periods during the apprenticeship for specialised practical training and assessment. There are 13 staff who teach, assess and carry out workplace reviews in the bicycle maintenance provision. Nine of these are assessors who operate regionally. There is currently a vacancy for a head of cycle training

### Strengths

- good off-the-job training
- good support for learners
- flexible provision to meet the needs of learners and employers

### Weaknesses

- some poor review practices
- poor promotion of equality of opportunity with learners

## Achievement and standards

62. Retention and achievement rates are satisfactory. The new measures of success show that the retention and achievement rates vary across the provision in comparison with national figures. For apprentices, who constitute the largest number of learners, the performance is generally better than national figures. For advanced apprenticeships and NVQ learners the performance is generally less good. However, the figures do show a clearly identifiable improving trend in all areas. The achievement rates for Train to Gain learners are generally good. More recent data on starters show significant improvements. This is particularly well demonstrated by the fact that 145 of 190 leavers since September 2005 have completed the full framework. The evidence shows that learners currently on programme are at least making satisfactory progress.

63. Learners who attend the training centre train in a disciplined business-like environment. There are good interpersonal relationships between tutors and learners and between learners.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	36	58	57	42	46
		timely	31	32	34	29	27
	2004-05	overall	38	34	57	29	45
		timely	51	24	33	18	25
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	280	54	48	34	32
		timely	245	26	22	15	13
	2004-05	overall	241	55	52	48	41
		timely	297	39	27	32	19
NVQ training for young	2003-04	overall	9	44	47	0	0
		timely	9	11	32	0	0
	2004-05	overall	12	25	57	0	0
		timely	21	14	37	0	0

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)).

## The quality of provision

64. Off-the-job training is good, as recognised in the self-assessment report. There is a well-equipped specialist workshop which is available to 30 per cent of all bicycle maintenance learners. ATG has developed specialist training rigs for bicycle repair and there is good sponsorship by major international manufacturers. For other engineering learners, there are good workshop and training facilities. There are well-qualified and experienced training officers. Well-organised training in six-week blocks provides flexible access to programmes. A very sophisticated programme now controls the whole process of delivery of the technical certificate including monitoring and assessment. Many learners take extra courses such as in CNC programming, which is available free because of ATG's

CoVE status. Ten per cent of advanced apprentices take a higher national certificate while completing the level 3 NVQ.

65. There is good support for learners. As recognised in the self-assessment report, there are regular and frequent visits to employed learners and they have access to assessors by telephone if they have a problem. In addition, many have weekly contact at the training centre. Assessors for bicycle maintenance engineering take in equipment when it is not available in the workplace. Learners feel assessors are supportive, approachable and encouraging. They give help and support with learning when required and this gives learners' confidence in their ability to complete their programmes. There are other instances of individual support such as bringing redundant apprentices into the training centre while searching for a new employer. Help with travel costs is particularly supportive for unemployed learners.

66. There is flexible provision which meets the needs of learners and employers. The flexible delivery for bicycle maintenance suits the small businesses involved. The facility for the programme to be entirely work-based means that some employers have enrolled on the programme. This improves skill levels in the bicycle trade and the qualifications enhance the status and standing of the business. The full-time course is flexible in that the six-week sections enable learners to start at any time. Engineering courses have changed to meet business needs, such as introducing the CNC course. There are a variety of units to meet the individual needs of learners and employers. Extra courses can be taken and there is good progression onto advanced apprenticeships and progression to higher education. There is unusually high satisfaction among learners for their tutors, the structure of the course, the delivery and the discipline imposed. Employers are very satisfied with outcomes and have worked for many years with ATG, although the occasional breakdowns in communication are not helping the relationships.

67. The induction process for full-time level 2 engineering programmes includes the identification of additional learning needs. Learners receive a copy of their programme and related information on CD-ROM. This improves learners' awareness of, and access to, information about their programme. There is also good support for jobsearch activities. This is regularly reinforced and includes guidance on interview techniques. Learners find the induction process helpful. It takes up to a day in the workplace at the start of bicycle training programmes.

68. Basic skills support is available for full-time and employed learners in engineering. However, those attending regional bicycle maintenance programmes do not have access to the support. There are plans to extend basic skills support for employed learners through a peripatetic worker who will visit learners in the workplace. There is no initial assessment for other learning difficulties and no automatic access to support. This is left to the curriculum area.

69. Assessment for learners is satisfactory on full-time programmes. Planning of assessment in the workplace is arranged at much shorter notice and is often left to chance when the assessor arrives at the company to carry out a review. All technical certificates follow the awarding body guidelines for assessment. In bicycle training, employers appreciate the flexible approach of ATG's staff, who change assessment plans to accommodate business requirements. There are often very few comments on review sheets about assessment planning.

70. Evidence for key skills across engineering is collected through the vocational programme and there are no additional assignments or projects to complete. ATG also uses basic skills tests for learners whose key skills are below level 1. Assessors in bicycle training have laptop computers which are equipped to run the online key skills exams.

71. There are some poor review practices. The frequent visits to learners in the workplace, provide the opportunity to carry out an observation and/or review using a generic form. The review form includes space to record the percentage progress towards the qualification. In practice, there is variation in how the process is carried out. Considerable time and care are taken carrying out observations and reviews, where possible making this a formal assessment. In the review, there is generally good coverage of the NVQ and the progress being made. The progress on the technical certificate is not recorded as well and many employers complain that they are not well informed on this aspect. Often specified actions are not clear and rarely are they given a completion date. There is one instance of a learner failing to bring his portfolio on three consecutive visits and yet there was no attempt to challenge this to ensure it was presented next time. Other assessors take a more positive approach and are less tolerant when learners fail to achieve targets. Sometimes reviews contain too many closed questions.

### **Leadership and management**

72. The engineering provision is well managed. The staff are experienced and well qualified and recent recruitment is building up the team, using good staff development to ensure new staff quickly achieve their potential. Good use is made of IT to manage, develop systems, monitor and to communicate internally. Employers express satisfaction with the adaptability and flexibility of ATG to provide training to meet their needs. However, good links with employers are being occasionally hampered by insufficient communication. Employers are encouraged to give their views by questionnaires but there is little evidence of feedback to them. Assessment and internal verification for off-the-job training is well organised and monitored, and the planning of assessment and internal verification of the NVQs in the workplace is satisfactory. The new framework monitoring sheet for the workplace is good but it is not fully developed. The quality improvement systems are good, but may not be fully operating in all areas. There is a good match between the inspection findings and the self-assessment report but one significant weakness was not identified.

73. Promotion of equality of opportunity with learners is poor. Equality of opportunity is covered in the one-day induction, but the language used in handouts is not entirely appropriate to the learners. Learners' understanding tends to be superficial and the review process is little used to develop understanding. While some observed reviews did include discussions, most are little more than tick box exercises. One employer now has a policy on display because of ATG's influence. There are 17 women and 54 learners from minority ethnic groups.



## Business administration and law

## Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Business management</b> Apprenticeships for young people	66	3
<b>Customer service</b> Apprenticeships for young people	55	3

74. ATG has 121 learners in business administration and law. Of the 55 apprentices in customer service, 36 are at level 2 and 19 are at level 3. In business administration, there are 36 apprentices and 16 advanced apprentices. Fourteen learners are working towards an apprenticeship in business management, of whom four are advanced apprentices. About half of the learners are based in the Slough area and the rest around Aylesbury.

75. Most of the learners are employed and most are recruited directly by ATG. Nearly all of the training is carried out in the workplace, either by employers or by ATG's staff. Progress reviews are carried out at least quarterly and sometimes more often.

76. In addition to the team leader and an administrator, there are two full-time assessors and four self-employed assessors who are responsible for supporting learners throughout their programme. All assessors are qualified, and five are also internal verifiers. They are based in ATG's offices in Aylesbury and Slough.

### Strengths

- good retention rates
- good individual target-setting

### Weaknesses

- insufficient initial assessment of learners' literacy and numeracy needs
- insufficient promotion of equality of opportunity with learners

## Achievement and standards

77. Overall, learners' achievements are satisfactory. Success rates for customer service apprentices were good in 2004-05, but most success rates are in line with national averages. The retention rates are good for the past two years.

78. In administration, the overall qualification success rates for apprentices and advanced apprentices in 2004-05 were in line with national averages. However, the proportion of learners who completed their framework in a timely fashion was below the national average for those who finished their training in 2003-04 and 2004-05. In customer service, success rates were good for apprentices who completed in 2004-05. However, for advanced apprentices, they were in line with the national average, having been well above the average in the previous year.

79. Although it is too early to judge success for 2005-06, the retention rates are good for the past two years. For example, in administration, 88 per cent of apprentices who started



in 2004-05 and 2005-06 are either still in learning or have completed their framework. In customer service, nearly 80 per cent of advanced apprentices who started in the two years to 2005-06 are either still in learning or have completed their framework. Most of the current learners are making good progress towards completing their framework within the agreed time period.

80. The standard of work being achieved by most learners is satisfactory. Portfolios are well organised and contain a good range of work-based evidence. Data relating to pass rates in key skills and technical certificates was not available.

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	40	73	46	43	28
		timely	24	25	30	17	18
	2004-05	overall	21	38	47	29	31
		timely	27	19	35	11	23
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	69	35	51	29	37
		timely	69	4	25	3	18
	2004-05	overall	56	54	56	52	45
		timely	51	29	35	24	28
NVQ training for young	2003-04	overall	2	50	48	0	0
		timely	2	0	35	0	0
	2004-05	overall	1	100	57	0	0
		timely	2	0	43	0	0

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)).

## The quality of provision

81. Target-setting for individual learners is good. Targets are well recorded on the NVQ assessment and review sheet which is completed during each workplace visit. This clearly identifies targets to be achieved and those outstanding from the previous visit. It shows progress and achievement in all aspects of the learners' framework. In consultation with the learner and the supervisor, the assessor reviews and updates the record to reflect current progress. Learners are well motivated as they can see what they have achieved and what they need to do to make progress towards their qualification.

82. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. ATG's assessors provide individual coaching, and some employers are involved in training. Customer service and business administration learners are given a workbook that provides them with the information to complete the background knowledge requirements of the NVQ and helps to prepare them for the technical certificate. However, there are insufficient learning resources for the 10 apprentices who are working towards the team-leading NVQ at level 2. Some workshops are arranged at both of ATG's sites if a viable number of learners can attend. For those who cannot attend, the information is provided in a learning pack. Assessment practice is satisfactory.

83. The range of programmes is satisfactory. Some learners progress to other frameworks and there are instances of some learners taking three qualifications at levels 2 and 3, within business administration and customer service. Some learners are planning to complete additional units of the NVQ to enhance their final qualification. One employer is sponsoring learners to take a foundation degree at the local college. Most learners are given time at work to develop their portfolios. Most workplaces are of a good standard, offering learners an appropriate environment for learning and assessment opportunities. Learners are often part of a workplace team and are given roles and responsibilities that promote confidence and develop their skills.

84. Learners on all programmes receive satisfactory support. Learners have access to their assessors through frequent visits to the workplace, or by e-mail and mobile telephone contact. Advice and guidance is satisfactory. During the inspection, potential applicants from a local school were invited to a taster session on customer service. At induction, learners are given a contact sheet which contains information and details of external agencies that can provide advice and guidance on personal or career issues. For those learners who become unemployed, jobsearch advice is provided by ATG.

85. The arrangements for assessing the literacy and numeracy support needs of learners are insufficient. ATG has identified the need to improve the existing arrangements, and the self-assessment report recognises that some learners do not take a key skills diagnostic test. Inspectors found examples of learners taking key skills at an inappropriate level for their ability. Some learners for whom additional learning support is clearly needed, have not taken an appropriate initial assessment.

### **Leadership and management**

86. There are monthly individual meetings between the manager and the assessors. Learners' progress is carefully monitored. The retention rates are improving, but as yet there is no established trend of improvement in success rates. There are well-established employer links. Communication with employers and learners is good. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced, and the arrangements for their appraisal and continuous professional development are good. Good practice is shared among the team.

87. Internal verification is satisfactory. A regularly updated sampling plan covers the verification of units achieved, the observation of assessment practice and interviews with learners at different points during the programme. Assessors receive written feedback and action points on their judgements, and internal verification reports are signed off when actions are completed. Quarterly meetings are held to standardise practice. Teaching and learning is observed and graded, although this is a fairly new development. The self-assessment report for business administration, management and customer service identified the weaknesses of the provision, but it overstated some of the strengths.

88. Equality of opportunity is insufficiently promoted with individual learners. At progress reviews, learners are asked to confirm that they are aware of the content of the equal opportunities policy, but their understanding is not adequately checked. The information on equality of opportunity at induction is not memorable for many learners.

