

# The Lawn Tennis Association

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321537

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## Background information

### Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

#### Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

### Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)), reports from the inspectorates' monitoring visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Sport and recreation

## Description of the provider

1. The Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) is the National Governing Body (NGB) for tennis in the United Kingdom. The LTA is funded through their national office by the London West LSC to deliver an Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence (AASE) programme in tennis. The LTA delivers the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) and the sporting qualifications. The technical certificates, are funded by, and delivered by, schools and colleges.
2. Tennis training is delivered through a national network of 18 independent, LTA accredited High Performance Centres (HPC's). Some of these are commercial clubs others are member run clubs. Learners independently select the schools and colleges at which they wish to study.
3. All learners are recruited directly by the HPC's. To join the AASE programme, all learners must be capable of achieving either A-Levels or the national diploma in sport. Learners need also to have reached the minimum LTA personal performance rating of 6:1 and have the potential of progressing on to the professional tennis circuit.
4. The first two year AASE programme was launched in 2006/07 with 51 learners. A further 88 started in October 2007 increasing to 95 starts in October 2008. At the time of the inspection 189 learners were on programme. Approximately 60% of learners are male and 40% female.
5. The AASE programme is led by a programme manager who is supported by the infrastructure of the NGB in the LTA Head Office and by a wider team of 18 HPC managers and their qualified LTA coaches. Assessments for the NVQ are managed by a team of 12 assessors and two internal verifiers.

## Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

## Sector subject areas

Sport and Recreation	Good: Grade 2
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## Overall judgement

### Effectiveness of provision

#### Good: Grade 2

6. The overall effectiveness of LTA's AASE programme is good. Leadership and management and the provision in sporting excellence are good. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.
7. Achievement and standards are good. Success rates in AASE are good. Learners' develop excellent high-level tennis skills and self-confidence progressively through the programme. Most learners gain additional tennis coaching qualifications. No learners have left the programme for the past two years.
8. The overall quality of the provision is good. Teaching and learning are characterised by high-quality, well structured tennis coaching and an individual tailored coaching approach to the delivery and understanding of the NVQ. The delivery of the programmes is well structured and flexible and meets the needs of learners' well. Learners are well supported by HPC' and LTA staff. Insufficient attention is given to linking the academic technical certificates studied by learners in their school and colleges.
9. The LTA's leadership and management are good. Delegation of training to the HPC's contributes effectively to the local and regional training opportunities for the best young tennis players. Operational and strategic management are good, involving staff at all levels. Communication and monitoring are effective. LTA and HPC staff are well trained and highly motivated. Resources are good. The arrangements for some continuous improvement protocols have recently been revised; however they are not yet fully established across all the HPC's. Arrangements for equality of opportunity are satisfactory.

### Capacity to improve

#### Good: Grade 2

10. The LTA's capacity to improve is good. Success rates are good and retention is 100%. Withdrawal rates are exceptionally low and closely linked to learners leaving for full-time positions in the tennis industry or higher education. The quality improvement system covers all aspects of provision delivered by the LTA. Teams share good practice and effectively identify areas for improvement. Steps taken to promote improvement have led to particularly positive changes. These are now effectively promoting quality improvement and are beginning to have an impact and improve learning. Formal links with the schools and colleges that deliver the technical certificates are insufficient in ensuring all aspects of the framework are effectively pulled together. Links with universities to develop higher education destinations in the UK are improving. Links to universities with tennis scholarships in the USA are good. Facilities in the HPC's are good and provide learner's with a wide range of playing surfaces, coaching and other support.
11. Self-assessment is satisfactory overall. The LTA has an established self-assessment process involving all staff and learners. Learners' views are sought in a planned cycle of feedback. The most recent self-assessment report is critical, accurate and provides evidence that the LTA knows what is working well and what needs attention. The link between self-assessment and quality improvement is good.

## Key strengths

- Good framework success rates
- Good development of high performance skills
- Good facilities and resources to support the development of tennis skills
- Highly individualised learner programmes
- Good incorporation of AASE into the LTA strategic plan
- Highly effective communication between the LTA and HPC's

## Key areas for improvement

- Under-developed processes for monitoring quality
- Insufficient links with schools and colleges

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

#### Good: Grade 2

12. Achievements and standards are good. Framework success rates are good. Of the 51 learners who enrolled on the programme in September 2006, 78% have successfully completed all elements of their framework, whilst a further six continue in learning. Of those who successfully completed in 2008, 93 % have secured tennis scholarships in the USA or progressed to higher education in the UK or have tennis related jobs. Early leavers left to follow careers in professional tennis. Learner retention for all subsequent starts is 100%. The LTA analyses recruitment, performance and withdrawal patterns for learners from all backgrounds, but does not yet have sufficient data to identify meaningful trends.
13. Learners develop a good range of high performance skills. Most learners have made significant improvements within LTA and International Tennis Federation (ITF) ratings and rankings. Five played in the main draw of Junior Wimbledon in 2008. Very high standards of coaching are linked to specific skills development for each player, supported by detailed analysis of performance in competitive play. Learners understand the inter-relationship between aspects of performance analysis and improvements in their physical and emotional conditioning. All recognise the impact of the programme in supporting improvements within both their match play and their future career development. Support from international coaches and opportunities to attend high profile competitions adds considerable value to the programme. Learners develop significantly enhanced interpersonal and communication skills as they associate with international athletes and coaches on a daily basis. These strengths were identified in the providers' self-assessment report.

### Quality of provision

#### Good: Grade 2

14. The quality of the provision is good, as is the standard of tennis training. The planning of learning is very effective and highly individualised. Learning programmes are designed around the individual needs of players, balancing training and competition. Training programmes are built around an effective analysis of learners' skill, physical and emotional development needs. Individual sessional goals are identified through player needs analysis. Within training sessions excellent coaches ensure individuals work on specifically targeted personal skills and goals to ensure all learners gain high value from each session. The high quality sessions focus on performance development linked to seasonal training and competition regimes. At each HPC very good facilities are in place to support the development of tennis skills. Centres provide, a safe and appropriate environment with a full range of playing surfaces. All have extensive indoor facilities. Other specialist coaches and professionals including physiotherapists, strength and conditioning coaches, nutritionalists and injury rehabilitation staff are utilised effectively to fulfil individual needs with regard to physical conditioning, emotional development and personal development.
15. Learners also have access to a wide range of tennis related experiences including gaining LTA coaching qualifications, attending international competitions and attend motivational



workshops with international coaches and players. These activities are used well to support evidence in the well presented NVQ portfolios.

16. Learner induction is effective. Learners attend both a national NVQ induction and a local induction in their tennis centre. The national induction provides learners with some appropriate and well contextualised equality and diversity information through participative and meaningful workshops. Guidance and support for learners is effective and, following a revised review framework, pulls together all aspects of the learners tennis and NVQ programme. Assessors meet with learners every 12 weeks, however, coaches often complete review updates with learners as required.
17. The extent to which programmes meet the needs of learners is good. Learners have a clear understanding of the direct relevance of their programmes to their potential career aspirations. Many readjust initial aspirations once they appreciate what is required to become a professional tennis player.
18. Support and guidance for learners is good. Learners are well supported by coaches in the HPC's. Coaches have a good understanding of the content of learners' programmes. They work well to ensure that learners have good opportunities for assessment and sufficient time away from practical activities to work with their assessors. Assessors and coaches work with learners to plan assessments and other work. Information, advice and guidance to learners potentially joining the programme is satisfactory and emphasises all aspects and expectations that will be put on learners.
19. The LTA do not provide any language, literacy or numeracy support for learners, this is supplied by the schools and colleges. . However, the LTA does provide support for learners with dyslexia. The strengths and areas for improvement identified by inspectors were also identified in the LTA's self-assessment.

## **Leadership and management**

**Good: Grade 2**

### **Equality of opportunity**

Satisfactory: Grade 3

20. Leadership and management are good. The LTA have incorporated the AASE programme very effectively into their strategic plan to identify and train professional tennis players for the future, building on commercial and members club initiatives. The AASE programme forms the pinnacle of a strong tennis development programme and academy structure, providing a clear professional pathway for young players to become professional players, coaches and other tennis professionals. The LTA's strategy links closely with the lasting legacy expectations highlighted in the Olympic bid and the LTA's workforce development vision. The LTA have effectively promoted some very appropriate partnerships with universities, commercial centres and clubs to further support the AASE programme and provide additional training opportunities. The LTA universities programme has developed links with universities willing to recognise the AASE programme as additional value of 80 UCAS points for entry into higher education.
21. Overall management and communication is highly effective. The LTA closely monitor learner progress and achievement. A performance team complete regular audit visits to the HPC's to check the performance of the AASE programmes and all other tennis activities. Communications between the HPC's and the LTA are well established and used very

effectively to share ASSE management and general tennis information. HPC coaches and LTA staff meet regularly to discuss and develop new initiatives to improve the programme. The recent revision to the NVQ portfolio was developed rapidly through these meetings. An AASE newsletter, produced by the LTA, provides learners with good information about the performance of learners in other HPC's. Audit visits however do not always result in an action plan for the HPC.

22. The links between individual HPC's and the schools and colleges responsible for providing the technical certificates are insufficient. Where links exist they are ineffective and are not used to ensure continuity across the aspects of the framework. Schools and colleges are often not aware of the rest of the framework the learners are following. The LTA rely on information communicated by the learners to assess their progress at school or college. This information is not used effectively to ensure the learner is not compromised by the needs of their tennis or academic course. Learners who, as a result of their high standard of competition, spend significant periods of time away from their HPC are insufficiently supported to ensure that there is a coordinated approach to minimising the impact on their academic programme. Insufficient use is made of the results of diagnostic assessments to inform the implementation of specific support for individual learning needs. Where learners follow sport-related qualifications as part of their technical certificate, insufficient links are made with the delivery of the NVQ programme.
23. Equality and diversity is satisfactory. LTA staff, coaches and learners have an appropriate understanding of what equality and diversity means in their working environment. Much effective work has been done by the NGB to ensure coaches and learners are operating within the frameworks set out by the equality standard for sport. Learner reinforcement and understanding of equality and diversity issues is evident through the programme. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of equal opportunities and how it affects them in the workplace. Learners understand the privileges of being recognised as elite tennis players and manage this position respectfully. Guidance for complaints, grievances and appeals is clear. The nature of the programme puts entry limitations on participants, very few if any disabled tennis players meet the overall entry criteria for the AASE programme. All coaches and employees of the LTA and HPC's are CRB checked and the LTA deliver NSPCC assessed child protection training as an integral part of all LTA coaching qualifications. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. Each HPC has a dedicated member of staff who manages safeguarding in the centre. The LTA has appropriate policies and procedures to report any concerns about the welfare of learners. Central record of checks carried out for staff are maintained as part of the management of coaches.
24. Significantly the self-assessment process has been thorough and particularly effective in identifying areas for improvement whilst involving all staff and learners. The self-assessment is critical, accurate and provides evidence that the LTA knows what is working well and what needs attention. A comprehensive quality improvement plan is in place. Actions it specifies have appropriate deadlines for completion and are clearly aimed at improving the learners' experience. A number of revised performance monitoring measures have recently been actioned. Some quality processes are under developed. For example the learner review process and the formal observation of on-court practical sessions. These processes are not yet consistently applied across all HPC's. Following feedback the LTA have recently revised the NVQ folder. Regular meetings between HPC managers, assessors and coaches result in the identification of good practice and areas for development. Outcomes from these activities are not shared in detail across the other groups in a manner that promotes quality improvement.

## What learners like:

- 'I could never have afforded to do this if I was not on the AASE programme'.
- 'It has made me a whole player'.
- 'The programme works well, I can combine my school work with my tennis'.
- 'I have learnt annual planning is really important, I now realise how important it is to add structure to all I do'.
- 'Individual goal setting allows us to work together as a team, whilst all developing our skills'.
- 'The coaching is excellent; we get brilliant support to improve our tennis skills'.
- 'I now take responsibility for my goal setting and report back on my performance'.
- 'I like and appreciate the top level coaching we receive'.
- 'The help and guidance on fitness has been awesome'.
- 'I have no regrets about doing this programme; it has helped me appreciate what I can do'.
- 'I really value the individual tutorial time'.
- 'I started the programme with the intent of becoming a pro, but I soon realised I needed to change my focus to becoming a coach'.

## What learners think could improve:

- 'The lack of access to courts at peak times'.
- 'Not enough communication between the schools and the tennis centre'.
- 'Too much focus on improving my ranking instead of exploring the other opportunities I may have'.
- 'I have to tell my teachers if I want time off, most understand but some make me feel bad'.
- 'Time with assessors is often too short; I have not really developed a relationship with my assessor'.
- 'Travel time between college and the tennis centre often gets us down as it can take a long time by public transport'.