

Access to Music

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 50313

Name of lead inspector: Richard Beaumont HMI

Last day of inspection: 6 November 2009

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

Access to Music Limited (ATM) was founded in 1992 as an independent music company. The head office is based in Leicester and training is delivered in ten centres throughout England. The main centres are Birmingham, Bristol, London and Norwich. ATM offers a range of services, including training, the design of learning programmes, events organisation and consultancy. ATM is contracted by London South Learning and Skills Council (LSC)

In 2008/09, ATM delivered training to 1,333 government funded music learners, of which 19% were female and 14% were from ethnic minority groups. All music learners are enrolled on to key skills. ATM delivers music courses in partnership with ten further education colleges. The proportion of business from direct government funded provision is 90%. In 2008/09, ATM started a pilot apprenticeship programme with 100 self-employed musicians.

In February 2009, ATM changed ownership. It now has close links with Armstrong Learning that delivers learning on behalf of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) across many parts of England. The restructured senior management team includes a managing director, four directors and two non-executive directors and employs around 175 staff. ATM delivers government-funded teaching qualifications to its own staff. This subject area was not in scope of this inspection.

| Type of provision | Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09 |
|---|--|
| Provision for young learners: Further education (16 to 18) | 572 full-time learners |
| Provision for adult learners: Further education (19+) | 663 full-time learners |
| Employer provision: Apprenticeships | 98 apprentices |

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| Overall effectiveness of provision | Grade 3 |
| Capacity to improve | Grade 3 |
| | Grade |
| Outcomes for learners | 3 |
| Quality of provision | 2 |
| Leadership and management | 3 |
| Safeguarding | 2 |
| Equality and diversity | 3 |
| Subject areas | Grade |
| Performing Arts | 3 |

Overall effectiveness

1. The overall effectiveness of ATM is satisfactory. The development of learners' musical creative and performance skills is good. Learners enjoy their time at ATM. Progression rates into employment and further study are high. Success rates for musical programmes are satisfactory. However, there is much variation in success rates between centres and programmes, particularly in centres where ATM recruits many learners from areas of high deprivation. Overall, key skills success rates are low.
2. Teaching staff have good and current experience of the industry and they use this well to develop learners' musical talents. The opportunities for learners to develop innovative and creative skills are good; however, the planning to meet the needs of all learners in lessons is not fully developed. Curriculum enrichment is inspiring and learners are given good opportunities to share their musical talents with the local community and beyond. The arrangements for identifying and supporting learners with additional literacy and numeracy needs are good. Care and advice and guidance are good.
3. Following the recent acquisition of ATM, the senior management team has set a clear vision for the organisation. Centre staff are excited by the opportunities to develop provision. Partnership arrangements to further improve the quality of provision are effective. Safeguarding arrangements are good. Health and safety at ATM is managed well. Overall, equality and diversity is satisfactory. Data are

generally not used sufficiently to inform centres and senior management of key areas for improvement. Quality assurance arrangements and the sharing of best practice are not fully developed.

Main findings

- Since the previous inspection success rates for musical programmes have improved and are judged to be satisfactory. Success rates for key skills have improved over time but, overall, remain low.
- Learners develop good creative and innovative musical skills. They enjoy their time at ATM and they progress well into employment or higher levels of study.
- The opportunities for learners to develop innovative and creative skills are good. Teachers motivate learners well using their industry experience, music contacts and current knowledge. However, the planning of lessons to ensure that all learners' needs are met in lessons is not fully developed.
- Curriculum enrichment is inspiring. The opportunities for all learners to improve their skills in live performances to the local community and for many learners to perform nationally are very good. ATM maintains a strong focus on working with the industry to the benefit of learners.
- The identification and support for learners with additional literacy and numeracy needs are good. Arrangements for learners with special educational needs are not so well developed. Care and advice and guidance are good.
- The new owner and senior management team have set a clear vision for improving the quality of provision. Staff in the centres are excited by the opportunities these will bring. Aspects of the strategies to improve have not yet been fully developed and implemented.
- ATM has good partnerships with a wide range of organisations in the music industry. Such links have led to effective developments in the planning of training and the development of learners' skills.
- Learners feel particularly safe and clearly understand their rights and responsibilities. Arrangements for safeguarding learners are good. Health and safety at ATM is managed well. Equality and diversity is satisfactory.
- The use of data is not used sufficiently to inform centres and senior management of key areas for improvement. There is much variation in success rates across centres and programmes.
- Quality assurance arrangements and the sharing of best practice are not fully developed. ATM's gradings of internal observations of teaching and learning are mostly accurate. However, there is little analysis of the key aspects of teaching and learning at centre or national level to inform quality improvement.

What does ATM need to do to improve further?

- significantly improve key skills success rates
- use initial assessment results more effectively in planning lessons and improve learning opportunities for all learners
- further develop the curriculum to meet the needs of a more diverse body of learners
- further develop the use of management information and ensure all staff have a clear understanding of data as a tool for improving provision
- continue to develop quality assurance arrangements with particular emphasis on individual centre self assessment reporting and quality improvement plans
- share best practice between centres to support those where performance is not as effective
- develop clear approaches to increasing learners' understanding of equality and diversity, in particular planning lessons

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- being a part of a 'music' family that includes staff
- making good progress and in some cases learning more than expected
- enjoying practical work and developing skills to industry standard, getting individual feedback from respected music professionals
- feeling well supported all the time
- having awesome staff who are passionate about music.

What learners would like to see improved:

- poor attendance of others affects my learning – feels unfair
- more outside speakers and visiting specialists
- more opportunities for mixing learners across performance and production programmes
- more performance opportunities
- somewhere to relax and eat in comfort.

Views of employers:

There are no employers that actively support the learning process.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

4. The recent change in ownership has generated a clearer vision for improving and developing the company. Centre staff are more positive about the future direction of the organisation. The recent introduction of the online learning resource facility and the tracking of learners' progress are good. Support for learners with additional literacy and numeracy needs has been much improved. The setting of targets and monitoring of key performance indicators are generally satisfactory. However, the use of data and quality assurance arrangements are not sufficiently developed to address the variations in the quality of provision between centres. Centre self-assessment reports are too evaluative.
5. Since the previous inspection success rates have improved, and continue to be judged satisfactory. Overall, teaching and learning, external partnerships and enrichment continue to be effective aspects for developing learners' musical skills and their understanding of the industry. However, some findings from the previous inspection either remain as an area for improvement or have not been maintained. For example, key skills was highlighted as a key weakness at the previous inspection, and the use of management information to monitor performance continues to be insufficiently robust. Equality and diversity were previously judged to be good and are now satisfactory.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

6. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Learners' success rates on music programmes are satisfactory. Based upon ATM's data records, success rates have improved over the past three years by three percentage points to 66% in 2008/09. In the same three-year period, retention rates have declined by 4% to 70%, although achievement rates have increased by 8% to 94%. Success rates in 2008/09 vary considerably between centres from 47% to 82%. There is little variation in success rates between learner groups.
7. The majority of learners are enrolled onto three key skills. Overall, key skills success rates remain consistently low. Success rates for application of number levels 1 and 2 declined to 25% and 21%. Success rates for levels 1 and 2 information and communication technology (ICT) declined significantly to 10% and 6% respectively. Approximately half of those learners who fail to achieve a communication or application of number key skill are transferred onto an adult literacy and/or numeracy qualification.
8. Learners' development of creative and performance skills is good. Learners enjoy their work and develop a confident approach towards improving their musical abilities. For example, in song writing and collaborative work, the development of learners' theoretical skills are satisfactory.

9. Learners progress well at ATM. In 2008/09, 40% of learners gained employment and 53% of learners continue on to higher levels of study. Attendance in 2008/09 is satisfactory at 80%.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

10. The quality of provision is good. A key strength of ATM's approach towards training are the good opportunities to develop innovative and creative learning. Learners are encouraged to explore various music genre and develop their own interpretations. Learners work effectively in teams and assessment feedback from staff and peers supports continuous improvement well. Teachers knowledge of the industry is particularly good and this is used well to motivate learners. However, there is insufficient planning to meet the needs of all learners in lessons. Extension activities for more able learners are generally not available. Learning resources and the tracking of learners' progress are well developed on ATM's virtual learning environment (VLE). However, in a small minority of cases, staff have not made the learning resources fully available.
11. Curriculum enrichment is inspiring. ATM staff and learners market, plan and organise many local performances. This gives all learners valuable opportunities to develop their musical, personal, social and business skills. ATM actively arranges national musical events that many learners contribute and benefit from.
12. The provision meets the needs of most learners. Programmes have a strong practical emphasis with clear recognisable themes, for example vocal artists, creative music producer and performing musician. The number of learners with low prior attainment has greatly increased in 2008/09. In the few centres where the majority of learners with low prior attainment attend there has not been a significant change in the way the curriculum is delivered to accommodate individual learners' needs.
13. Care, advice and guidance are good. Learners value the support they receive from staff throughout the programme.
14. The recognition of and support for learners with additional literacy and numeracy needs are good. Learning sessions are integrated into the vocational subject well. Progress is closely monitored and the VLE is used effectively to track assignment feedback and to plan for improvement. Arrangements for learners with special educational needs are not as well developed.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

15. Leadership and management are satisfactory. ATM has set a clear vision with strategies to develop the organisation. The recent acquisition of the company is leading towards a much clearer emphasis on improving the quality of provision. Senior staff maintain satisfactory communication with centre management through a series of planned meetings and visits. Key performance targets are

set and monitored at regular intervals. Overall, management is satisfactory. Success rates have improved slightly over the past three years, although the outcomes from regional centres vary significantly.

16. Across the whole organisation, quality improvement arrangements are not fully developed. Quality assurance policies and procedures are clear and the quality cycle detailed. The internal grading of observations of teaching and learning are generally accurate. However, some aspects of quality assurance have had insufficient impact on improving performance. For example, raising and improving key skill success rates and the sharing of best practice between centres are not fully developed.
17. Arrangements for safeguarding are good. Policies and procedures are appropriate and routinely updated. Enhanced disclosure checks on all staff in contact with learners are completed routinely and details held on a central list. ATM has thorough procedures in place to manage staff where confirmation of checks are not yet available. ATM is making appropriate preparation to implement vetting and barring procedures required by the Independent Safeguarding Authority. A senior manager is responsible for safeguarding and centre staff are fully aware of the safeguarding reporting requirements. All ATM staff have recently undergone safeguarding training. Learners are advised particularly well in how to stay safe in the music industry, for example in relation to lone working, drugs and alcohol. Learners who disclose to ATM staff are managed sensitively and appropriately. ATM routinely completes thorough risk assessments of all venues where learners perform. Learners feel safe at ATM. Health and safety is well managed.
18. Arrangements for promoting equality and diversity are satisfactory. Policies are routinely updated and procedures made clear to staff. The ethos of equality between learners and staff remains good as judged in the previous inspection.
19. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Learners have a satisfactory level of understanding of their rights and responsibilities. The planning of most lessons fails to develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity. For example, the origins of music types are not sufficiently used to develop learners' understanding of cultural diversity.
20. Managers take prompt and appropriate action in cases where complaints have been made. The new managing director is a member of the equality and diversity committee and has made appropriate changes to the equality and diversity action plan. There is insufficient equality and diversity training for all staff and arrangements for new staff are unclear. There is little variation in success rates between different learner groups. The ATM's approach to monitoring learner group data is not fully developed and centre staff have limited access to detailed data.
21. ATM's partnership arrangements are good. ATM works particularly well with the awarding body to develop programmes that reflect current musical trends. Links with external music agencies and colleges where training is delivered are well

established. Industry guest speakers effectively support the improvement of learners' knowledge of the industry. Many staff have good links with the industry, and they use these links effectively to the benefit of learners.

22. Staff have a clear understanding and are fully involved in the self-assessment process. The views of learners are used appropriately to inform improvement plans. The quality improvement plan links well to the findings of self-assessment. However, centre self-assessment reports are generally too evaluative. The use of success rate data to inform centres of learner performance is not used in sufficient detail. The grades awarded for teaching and learning are used within the self-assessment report, although there is little analysis of the key strengths and areas for improvement. ATM recognises that the self-assessment process requires further development.
23. Overall, value for money is satisfactory. ATM's use of resources are good. Staff use their knowledge and expertise particularly well. Investments in musical equipment are maintained to industry standards in most cases. Strategies to improve accommodation across all centres are in development. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory.

Information about the inspection

24. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's Director of Curriculum and Quality, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, the previous inspection report and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
25. Inspectors used group and individual interviews. They looked at questionnaires learners had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They visited six of the ten centres. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in performing arts.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
Access to Music

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

| Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate | Overall | 14-16 | 16-18 Learner responsive | 19+ Learner responsive | Employer responsive |
|--|---------|-------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Approximate number of enrolled learners | | | | | |
| Full-time learners | 1309 | - | 629 | 520 | 160 |
| Part-time learners | 0 | | | | |
| Overall effectiveness | 3 | - | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Capacity to improve | 3 | | | | |
| Outcomes for learners | 3 | - | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning? | 3 | | | | |
| How well do learners attain their learning goals? | 3 | | | | |
| How well do learners progress? | 3 | | | | |
| How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development? | 2 | | | | |
| How safe do learners feel? | 2 | | | | |
| <i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i> | - | | | | |
| <i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i> | 2 | | | | |
| Quality of provision | 2 | - | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development? | 2 | | | | |
| How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users? | 2 | | | | |
| How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners? | 2 | | | | |
| How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve? | 2 | | | | |
| Leadership and management | 3 | - | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation? | 3 | | | | |
| <i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i> | - | | | | |
| How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners? | 2 | | | | |
| How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap? | 3 | | | | |
| How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement? | 2 | | | | |
| How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners? | 3 | | | | |
| How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money? | 3 | | | | |

*where applicable to the type of provision

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