

ATG Training

Inspection report

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Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. ATG, previously Aylesbury Training Group, is a national provider, established in 1967 to train engineering apprentices. Member companies elect a Board of Directors who appoint the chief executive to run the company. In summer 2008 ATG moved into its Future Centre, in Aylesbury, where most provision is located. It also has a site in Manchester. ATG offers provision in child care, animal care, engineering (foundation and cycle maintenance), construction, information and communication technology (ICT), retail and commercial enterprise, business administration and customer service. ATG was a Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) in cycle maintenance and led a joint engineering CoVE with four partners, which has continued as the regional Skills for Technology consortium.
2. The company is led by a chief executive. Six managers report directly to him including three divisional heads of vocational areas. Technical training comprises 19 engineering and construction staff; business services (childcare, business and ICT) employs 22; cycle maintenance has 15. Ancillary services relating to training, such as learner support, are within these divisions. The head of quality improvement reports directly to the chief executive and does not manage any training staff. The remaining 20 staff carry out a range of support and operational roles. Of the 2007/08 turnover, 87% was from Learning and Skills Council funding.
3. The Adult Learning Inspectorate in 2006 graded leadership and management and quality assurance good. Health and social care was good and all other aspects were satisfactory. The July 2007 Ofsted monitoring visit measured significant progress in four areas and reasonable in the other two.
4. ATG provides training on behalf of the following providers:
 - Aylesbury College (engineering)
 - a consortium of Aylesbury schools and pupil referral units (engineering)
 - Serco (cycle maintenance)
 - Slough Borough Council (business administration and management).
5. The following organisations provide training on behalf of ATG:
 - St Tiggywinkles Wildlife Hospital (animal care)
 - Quantuvis (business improvement techniques)
 - The Childcare Company (childcare).

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Employer provision:	
Train to Gain	286 learners
Apprenticeships	571 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Grade 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	2
Subject Areas	Grade
Childcare learning and development	2
Engineering	2
Retail and commercial enterprise	3
Business administration and law	2

Overall effectiveness

- ATG delivers good provision in childcare, engineering, cycle maintenance and business administration. Retailing and warehousing are satisfactory. Its outstanding partnerships with voluntary organisations, schools and other providers promote inclusion strongly. Excellent industry links lead to outstanding equipment and resources for engineers and cycle mechanics. ATG's clear and well-conceived strategies are strongly supported by the board. Learners in all subject areas achieve high success rates and develop good vocational skills. Safeguarding is satisfactory. Childcare learners are highly aware of child protection. Engineers and cycle mechanics apply safe working practices particularly well. Teaching and learning are good. Well-planned assessment is responsive to employers' and learners' needs. Learner support is satisfactory. However, targets in some learning plans are too generic. Some review records lack detail. Some develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity insufficiently. Although quality assurance is effective, ATG does not always analyse or use data well enough. Lesson observations focus insufficiently on learning. Self-assessment is insufficiently inclusive.

Main findings

- Success rates are high. Learners develop good practical skills applied well at work. Employers' appreciation often results in promotion. The cycle mechanics' qualification is becoming a licence to practise. Learners feel safe and know how to protect themselves from harm. Programme led apprentices attend stimulating events encouraging healthy lifestyles and organise fundraising for local charity.
- Teaching and learning are good. Learning resources are particularly good, following strong investment in workshops, equipment and items such as interactive boards. Practical engineering and cycle maintenance resources are outstanding. Even very experienced workers improve their practice through learning. Assessment is thorough and well planned but sometimes insufficiently linked to training at work.
- Progress reviews are satisfactory. Some are recorded well, but targets are often too generic. Review forms have space to record discussions on safety, equality and diversity but these are not used enough. Some assessors check these areas well. Others do not develop learners' knowledge and understanding effectively. Records of discussions lack detail. Employers are insufficiently involved.
- Flexible programmes meet learners' and employers' needs effectively. Cycle shops value learners' accreditation highly. Childcare and retail assessors accommodate shifts well. Business assessors blend public and private funding intelligently, enhancing the value of training. St Tiggywinkles Wildlife Hospital learners treat an unusually wide range of species, providing accredited volunteers who progress into animal care professions.
- Partnerships are outstanding. High profile industry links provide state-of-the-art materials for cycle maintenance learners and relevant, flexible qualifications. Links to voluntary organisations, schools and councils benefit under-represented groups and promote inclusion. Consortium 14 to 19 diploma work and membership of the regional provider network broaden local opportunities, particularly in engineering. City cycle projects promote fit, sustainable communities and up-skill the unemployed.
- Support for learners is satisfactory, assisting those with disabilities or personal problems sensitively and effectively. Staff offer good assistance and signpost appropriately to external agencies. Information, advice and guidance for programme led apprentices are good, developing their employability effectively. Guidance for Train to Gain learners is satisfactory. Initial assessment results are not used sufficiently plan learners' literacy and numeracy development.
- The chief executive officer and the board of trustees have set a clear and well-conceived strategic direction for ATG. Organisational objectives are appropriate and challenging. The trustees provide good support and challenge to managers. The management of subcontractors is good.
- The self-assessment report is largely accurate and has been used effectively to improve the quality of provision. However, it does not evaluate all aspects of

the provision explicitly or in sufficient depth, and staff and employers are not sufficiently involved in its development.

- Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Policies are comprehensive and prominently displayed. Learners receive appropriate training and show satisfactory understanding. ATG vets and trains its staff appropriately and handles welfare concerns effectively. Rigorous arrangements protect vulnerable schoolchildren. Health and safety risk assessment is thorough. Safety is strongly promoted.
- ATG strongly promotes social inclusion. Partnerships with pupil referral units, prisons and special schools offer training to vulnerable people. London's and Blackpool's jobless achieve cycle mechanic certification. ATG successfully challenges gender stereotypes. It manages complaints and incidents effectively. Procedures and plans are well written. Staff have regular, appropriate training.
- Quality assurance is effective in identifying areas for improvement and in highlighting good practice. However, lesson observation has not provided an accurate or reliable view of teaching and learning, and arrangements to share good practice are not yet fully effective.
- The use of management information to evaluate and improve the quality of provision is insufficiently systematic.

What does ATG need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the pace of achievement by more individualised and specific targets in learning plans which include learners' personal goals.
- Improve the use of initial assessment results to ensure that all learners have effective support to develop their literacy and numeracy.
- Ensure that review records fully reflect discussions, and that assessors consistently reinforce and develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity.
- Implement fully well-conceived plans to improve the accuracy and reliability of lesson observation by ensuring that observers place appropriate emphasis on learning, make consistently accurate grading decisions, and provide to teachers more precise actions for improvement.
- Ensure that self-assessment provides explicit and evaluative judgements on all aspects of the Common Inspection Framework; consider ways of obtaining the views of a broader range of employers, and implement plans to introduce course reviews, so that staff make a clear contribution to self-assessment.
- Ensure that management information is consistent and up to date, and that all managers are able to use it systematically to drive up the quality of provision.
- Introduce a more formal and systematic means of sharing good practice between staff both within and between programme areas.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the amount of 'hands on' practical work
- the support of approachable staff who explain things well
- being paid whilst working towards a qualification that enhances their curricula vitae
- being able to learn from their mistakes
- feeling valued by working towards achieving a qualification
- gaining experience and insight into different parts of the business
- learning new skills, team working, and working with a variety of people
- being able to learn a wide range of practical skills with the animals at St Tiggywinkles Wildlife Hospital to equip them for their chosen career.

What learners would like to see improved:

- more learning resources for business
- understanding of how to gather evidence in retail
- keeping in better touch at the start of the programme in warehousing.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- apprentices' mature and professional approach and the high calibre of candidates brought forward for interview
- the professionalism, flexibility and enthusiasm of ATG's staff
- the relevant and realistic target setting between visits
- the way in which ATG brings out the best in learners
- ATG's responsiveness to solving any problems
- the quality of partnership working to help employers to choose the most appropriate training for staff and help learners succeed
- high quality of up-to-date equipment and facilities at the centres
- the use of e-portfolios which speed up learners' progress.

What employers would like to see improved:

In a few cases:

- more information from ATG's trainers on the requirements of the programme and the progress of learners
- more rapid progress in building portfolios for learners working towards an NVQ at level 3 (engineering)
- better continuity when there is a change in the assessor allocated to learners.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

7. ATG demonstrates good capacity to improve. Most areas for development from the previous inspection have been rectified, although improving the sharing of good practice remains work in progress. Outcomes for learners have improved since the previous inspection and are now good throughout the provision. Self-assessment is accurate and is used effectively to improve the quality of provision. ATG's strategic direction is well conceived and the re-structuring of the organisation is being managed well. The board of trustees provides good support and challenge to managers and have agreed challenging targets for improvement. Partnership working is exceptionally strong. Resources for learning are good.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

8. Learners achieve well and develop good practical skills which enhance their employability. Success rates are high, particularly in cycle maintenance and Train to Gain childcare. Learners enjoy learning which they apply to a high standard at work. Employers appreciate the skills they bring, particularly in cycle maintenance, where the qualification is becoming a licence to practise. Many learners are promoted as a result of their training.
9. Learners feel safe and understand how to protect themselves from harm. Programme led apprentices attend stimulating events to encourage them to lead healthy lifestyles and stay safe, for instance police workshops on road safety, gangs and knife crime. Apprentices organise fundraising events to support local charities.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

10. Teaching and learning are good. Learners and employers value up-to-date training. Resources for learning are good, as a result of the move to new premises on the edge of Aylesbury and considerable investment in workshops, equipment, and other items, such as interactive whiteboards. Practical engineering and cycle maintenance resources are outstanding. Even very experienced, workers gain new knowledge and improved practices. Assessment is rigorous, thorough and well planned, with good short-term targets, although sometimes insufficiently linked to off-the-job training.
11. Progress reviews are satisfactory. Some are well recorded, but many targets are too generic and not adapted to learners' roles and progress. Although review forms contain space to record discussions on health, safety, equality and diversity, these are insufficiently used. Some assessors check these areas well but others pose closed questions which are insufficiently probing or developmental. Review records are insufficiently clear about topics discussed. Employers are insufficiently involved in reviews, although they do receive

reports. Some express frustration that they know too little about learners' programmes.

12. ATG meets the needs of learners and employers well. Programmes are flexible and effectively tailored to employers' requirements. Cycle mechanics gain access to accreditation which employers value. Childcare, retail and warehousing assessors accommodate shift patterns and business pressures well. Business assessors blend public and private funding intelligently to enhance the value of training. The small subcontract with St Tiggywinkles Wildlife Hospital provides learners with excellent opportunities to work on an unusually wide range of animal species and conditions. Their participation enables the charity to staff its hospital with accredited volunteers who mostly progress into animal care professions.
13. ATG has outstanding partnerships with a wide range of organisations. Community links to voluntary organisations, local schools and councils benefit under-represented groups and provide opportunities to engage vulnerable young people in learning. Cycle maintenance has excellent industrial links to major manufacturers, distributors, retail employers, and the awarding body, which provide learners with state-of-the-art materials and techniques and relevant, flexible qualifications. Cycle projects in London and Blackpool promote sustainability and healthy lifestyles as well as providing skills and jobs for the long term unemployed. ATG has a key role to provide part of the business diploma for the local 14 to 19 consortium. Its subcontract from Aylesbury College enables their learners to continue to study engineering. Learners benefit from shared good practice through ATG's chairmanship of Thames Valley provider network's apprentice subgroup. The retail partnership enables southern Mid Counties Co-operative learners to participate in learning.
14. Support arrangements are satisfactory. Learners with disabilities or personal difficulties are supported sensitively and effectively. ATG has good internal arrangements to provide assistance and cultivates national links to referral agencies for specialist help. ATG works closely with Connexions. Information, advice and guidance for programme led apprentices are good. Staff work well to develop their employability skills from the start of their training. Mock interviews, curriculum vitae building and job search skills are effective in supporting good progression. Advice and guidance for learners on Train to Gain programmes are satisfactory. Although initial assessment clearly identifies learners' literacy and numeracy needs, the results are not always used well to plan learning.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

15. The newly appointed chief executive officer and the board of trustees have set a clear and well-conceived strategic direction for ATG that has been shared successfully with staff. Communication is good and staff rightly judge that the restructuring of the organisation is being managed well. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and comment favourably on the

feedback they receive on their performance. Staff are well qualified. Staff development is matched well to business and individual needs. Training related to teaching and learning, safeguarding and technical updating takes an appropriately high priority.

16. Governance is good. The board of trustees is successful in providing both support and challenge to managers. They have set clear objectives for the chief executive that fit very closely to ATG's strategic plan. Trustees are well informed and have a good balance of skills and experience to enable them to fulfil their roles.
17. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Policies and procedures are comprehensive, clear and prominently displayed in the centre. Learners receive appropriate training at induction and show satisfactory understanding. Their welfare concerns are dealt with sensitively and effectively. A suitably trained designated officer has delivered appropriate initial training for all staff, reinforced promptly after follow-up checks revealed areas of doubt. There is a clear schedule to update and extend staff knowledge. All staff in regulated roles have had Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and most others have been vetted by choice. ATG awaits government clarification before deciding how frequently these checks will be repeated. It has good arrangements to safeguard learners pending the receipt of CRB disclosure and acts appropriately when issues are identified. Good partnership arrangements safeguard vulnerable 14- to 16-year-old local schoolchildren. Links to external agencies to assist learners are appropriate. Arrangements to assess health and safety risks in premises and workplaces are thorough and rigorous. Safety is strongly promoted in the centre. Safeguarding risk assessment is effective. However, some resulting procedural changes are very recent and have yet to show impact.
18. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. ATG is very successful in promoting social inclusion and places a high priority on fairness and respect. Partnership work with pupil referral units, prisons and special schools offers good training opportunities to vulnerable adults and young people. Experienced, but uncertificated, cycle mechanics have access to accreditation through ATG's unique programme which is also developing employability for jobless young people in Blackpool and London. ATG promotes fair recruitment energetically and successfully challenges gender stereotypes through special events, also encouraging broader participation through links to faith groups. There is no significant difference in performance between learners of different ethnic origins. Equality action plans are clear and well written. Staff and learners receive appropriate training during induction. Relevant topics are discussed with learners in reviews and during team meetings between assessors. Complaints and incidents of bullying are very rare, but staff manage them promptly and effectively. Some assessors reinforce learners' knowledge of equality and diversity well during reviews, others are too perfunctory. Too few review forms show evidence of topics discussed.

19. Self-assessment is largely accurate, although it does not evaluate all aspects of the Common Inspection Framework explicitly or in sufficient depth. Its value as a quality improvement tool is demonstrated in successful interventions to improve subcontract management, which is now good. The report correctly identifies that staff and employers are insufficiently involved in the self-assessment process. However, staff recognise the judgements made and appropriate steps have been taken to ensure that they contribute to the next round of self-assessment through a process of course review.
20. Quality improvement processes are well documented, comprehensive and systematic. They clearly demonstrate ATG's commitment to continuous improvement of the provision and are effective in identifying areas for improvement and in highlighting good practice. However, arrangements for spreading good practice are largely informal and are not fully effective. ATG has correctly identified that lesson observation has not been providing a sufficiently reliable view of the quality of teaching and learning. Observation records reviewed by inspectors showed inconsistencies in grading, insufficient emphasis on learning and imprecise actions for teachers to improve the quality of lessons. Suitable measures to rectify these issues are being taken. The use of success rate data to drive improvement is inconsistent and inspectors encountered difficulties in reconciling the data provided to show an accurate picture of learners' success across the range of provision.
21. Value for money is good, evidenced by good outcomes for learners, whose needs are well met by particularly good resources, and the promotion of sustainability through all programmes.

Subject areas

Childcare Learning and Development

Grade 2

Context

22. There are 162 learners working towards childcare qualifications. Fifty nine are on National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) at level 2 and 66 on NVQ at level 3 Train to Gain programmes. Twenty two are apprentices and 15 are advanced apprentices. Male learners comprise 6% of the cohort. Eighty nine per cent of learners are White. All learners are employed in a range of childcare settings which include schools, family centres and nurseries.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Adult apprenticeship success rates are consistently high, reaching 86.4% in 2008/09. Overall success rates on advanced apprenticeships rose in 2009/10. Staff managed learner redundancies well, retaining some who were at risk of failing, but apprenticeship success rates fell from 74.5% to 70%. Timely success rates are above average and rising. All five Train to Gain leavers so far achieved their qualification.
- Learners develop good skills and apply them effectively at work. Greater self confidence and team working skills lead to promotion for many. Progress and attainment are good. Portfolios contain a high standard of work. However, incorrect spelling and grammar are not challenged in written and display work. This is particularly important for learners in childcare settings.
- Learners' understanding of child and vulnerable adult protection and safeguarding is good. Learners feel well prepared to deal with disclosures and understand how to keep safe. There have been no incidents of harassment or bullying.
- Teaching and learning are good. Classrooms are attractive with high quality teaching resources. Learners have easy access to text books for NVQs and specific aspects of childcare. ATG provides laptops for them to complete their work. Learners value informative, high quality workbooks. Projects generate good evidence for qualifications. Staff use their experience well to guide and support learners.
- Assessment practice is good. Assessors prepare their visits well and use a good variety of methods to meet learners' needs, building good rapport and putting them at ease. Assessment is flexibly planned to cover workplace requirements. Progress reviews are satisfactory. Targets are specific and manageable. However, some learners cannot distinguish review from assessment and prepare insufficiently.
- In some reviews, assessors do not sufficiently develop learners' understanding of health, safety, equality and diversity. Some use closed questions rather than encouraging learners to extend their knowledge. Discussion and promotion of

healthy, safe working practice varies. Most learners understand how diversity aspects apply to their work but some relate it only to the children in their care.

- ATG has well-established working relationships with employers that meet their needs well. Employers are well informed about NVQ requirements and fully engaged in the learners' programme. They work closely with assessors to plan learners' development and allow time off to complete work for the NVQ. Employers know learners progress and achievements. Programmes closely match learners' job roles and aspirations.
- Support, advice and guidance are effective. All learners have initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills. They know the results and receive effective individual support within ATG. Support for learners' personal circumstances is good. Tutors and assessors have sufficient appropriate experience to meet most needs. ATG signposts effectively to specialist help for specific problems.
- Leadership and management are good. Relationships between head office and regional staff are productive with good communication. Staff induction is satisfactory. Managers and assessors have effective monthly meetings, reviewing progress and identifying learners needing extra support. Managers make prompt and effective responses to improve learner retention and deal with previous poor assessor practice.
- Staff receive good professional development. All staff are qualified or are working towards qualifications for teaching and assessing. ATG has responded well to recent safeguarding legislation. All staff have received up-to-date training. This information directly benefits learners in childcare settings.
- Promotion of equality of opportunity is good. A successful initiative to increase male participation recruited seven men through free taster sessions. Another project encouraged unemployed young people to stay in education. Policies and procedures are comprehensive. Assessors receive regular training. However, some do not sufficiently develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity throughout their programme.
- Internal verification is satisfactory. Verification is well planned and decisions are recorded systematically. Internal verifiers and assessors meet quarterly to standardise their practice. However ATG has not yet observed all assessors to ensure assessment and review practice are consistent. The self-assessment report is broadly accurate. However, assessors and employers have not contributed and are unaware of the process.

What does ATG need to do to improve further?

- Improve promotion of equality and diversity during reviews, ensuring staff consistently extend learners' knowledge and understanding.
- Further extend observation of reviews in the workplace to all assessors to identify any development needs and standardise practice.
- Challenge learners' spelling and grammar in portfolios and displayed work and ensure learners develop adequate literacy skills to support the children they work with.

Engineering

Grade 2

Context

23. Currently 380 learners studying general engineering or cycle maintenance, comprising 109 on Train to Gain programmes and 271 on intermediate or advanced apprenticeships. Most are aged 19 to 24; 10% are female and 11% are from minority ethnic groups. A foundation level programme has 19 learners. Centres in Manchester and Aylesbury support cycle maintenance training throughout England. The Aylesbury centre provides off-the-job training for engineering, offered only in the south.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. A high proportion complete their programme within agreed timescales. Most make good progress towards their qualifications. Success rates for Train to Gain learners and cycle maintenance apprentices were high in 2008/09 and well above the national rate. Success rates for general engineering apprentices vary between satisfactory and good.
- Learners produce a high standard of work and demonstrate good practical skills. They develop very good knowledge and understanding. Portfolios contain a good variety of well-presented evidence. Most learners are occupationally competent by the time they complete their apprenticeship and some progress to supervisory positions. Cycle maintenance learners are often respected members of a small group at their employers.
- Learners feel safe on and off the job. Health and safety are particularly well promoted in ATG Centres and at work. Learners' good understanding is reinforced during workplace portfolio reviews. Learners adopt safe working practices both in the centre and at work. ATG staff are approachable, building good rapport and trust, enabling learners to feel confident to report concerns.
- Apprentices based at the centre take part enthusiastically in fundraising for local charities. ATG also organises workshops with local public services to promote healthy living, for instance safe driving and substance awareness. Cycle projects in London and Blackpool develop skills in previously-unemployed learners and promote healthy lifestyles in their communities.
- Training and assessment are well planned and are good. Learning plans are individualised and set realistic milestones and target dates for completion. Training and assessment are planned very flexibly to meet employers' and learners' needs. Staff deliver good formal training at ATG centres, and informally in the workplace. Not all learners are aware of the NVQ appeals process.
- Resources for learning are excellent. Centres have outstanding learning facilities. An exceptional range of industry-standard tools, equipment, parts and supplies is well supported by sponsoring manufacturers. Well-equipped classrooms have interactive boards and projectors. Large companies have a full

range of appropriate equipment to service manufacturing processes. Cycle shops are suitably equipped to develop learners' skills over the range required.

- Progress reviews are satisfactory. Review visits are regular, comprehensive and thorough. Assessors develop good rapport with learners. Apprentices clearly understand their progress through the framework. Target setting is good. However, assessors' progress estimates are based on experience not evidence. Review records do not capture discussions on safeguarding, health and safety in sufficient detail. Supervisors do not always attend reviews.
- The range and content of provision meet employers' and learners' needs and interests very well. Learning programmes are closely aligned to employment opportunities in engineering industries. Some learners gain additional NVQ units. All develop good skills including safe working practices. Employer engagement is particularly effective. All employers actively support their employees, and some provide good quality learning areas on site.
- Partnerships are outstanding. ATG is highly respected and nationally recognised within cycle manufacturing. It has close links with the Association for Cycle Traders, and is contracted to provide training for London's cycle hire scheme. A strong partnership enables Aylesbury College to continue engineering provision. ATG has further joint projects with the college and regional provider networks to broaden access to engineering.
- Support for learners is satisfactory. Learners' literacy and numeracy levels are assessed at enrolment and specific additional learning support is supplied by specialists within ATG. However, the system is insufficiently established for the cycle maintenance programme. Assessors supporting literacy and numeracy do not always hold the required level of qualification. ATG staff and employers support learners with personal difficulties well.
- Operational management is good. Staff are appropriately qualified and have valuable professional experience which motivates and inspires learners and employers. Data are used very effectively, particularly to monitor and manage staff performance. Assessor performance criteria are clearly linked to learners' timely achievement. However, some success rate data are less effectively analysed. Staff are not fully involved in self-assessment.
- Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily. Many strategies and programmes strongly and successfully promote inclusion. Learners' awareness is raised well during induction and off-the-job training, but assessors do not sufficiently promote broader aspects throughout their programmes. Some progress reviews develop discussions about topics of current interest, but not often in sufficient depth to extend learners' understanding.
- The provision offers good value for money. Outstanding resources in training centres are of high quality. They reflect current occupational standards. Much cycle maintenance equipment is highly specialised and supplied by international cycle manufacturers. Resources are well managed, and are used for commercial work as well as funded training.

What does ATG need to do to improve further?

- Redevelop review records to fully reflect all areas of discussion, and increase the promotion of equality and diversity by ensuring all staff are suitably updated and can confidently raise awareness of wider issues with learners and employers.
- Enable all learners to have adequate levels of support for identified learning needs by ensuring qualified staff are available.
- Improve the self-assessment reporting process by more detailed analysis of data and including the contributions of all necessary parties.

Retail and commercial enterprise

Grade 3

Context

24. Currently, 103 learners are taking part in programmes. Of these, 91 are on the diploma in retail course at level 2, with nine undertaking an apprenticeship. Twelve learners are on a warehousing and distribution programme, of whom three are apprentices. Of the learners, 96 work for one large employer, the Mid Counties Co-operative. The remaining seven are with small to medium-sized employers.

Key findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. Warehousing success rates within the planned length of programme in 2008/09 were high. Current learners on warehousing and the new retailing programme are making good progress towards achievement. Some learners make particularly rapid progress, reflecting their prior experience and competence.
- Learners develop a good standard of knowledge, in relation to both the qualification requirements and their employers' policies and procedures. They become more confident in their roles and demonstrate a good standard of work in portfolios and in their jobs. Some learners show good initiative to take ownership of their qualification.
- Learners feel safe in their workplace. Learners have a good understanding of safe working practices and understand what to do if they have any concerns over health, safety, security and their equality of opportunity.
- Most learners have a good involvement in community and charity projects. The Mid Counties Co-operative, responsible for most learners, has good policies allowing employees to use between 4 and 22 hours of paid work time per year in such projects. Recently, learners participated in charity fundraising events such as Sport Relief, football charity matches and support for schools.
- Teaching, training and assessment are satisfactory. On-the-job training and coaching by managers and assessors are effective. Assessment is good, with thorough recording and feedback to learners. Short-term action planning is very effective in moving learners through their qualification. Learning resources for warehousing are adequate, but resources for retail are not yet available.
- Planning of learning is ineffective. Initial assessment skills audits do not reflect learners' previous experience. Planning to meet individual learning needs is weak. Learners are sometimes on a lower level than their job and experience justifies. Staff do not sufficiently record or plan for training needs identified either through initial assessment or during the programme, although they are discussed with supervisors.
- Reviews of learners' progress are satisfactory. They are effective for monitoring progress and setting short-term targets. However, they do not sufficiently review learners' overall experience, including training and absenteeism.

Employers do not always participate sufficiently. Assessors often duplicate information between reviews and assessment plans.

- ATG meets employers' needs very well. Mid Counties Co-operative is closely involved in developing the training programme. The employer chose the units for the qualification and added tailored questions to ensure that learners have a thorough understanding of the company's own policies and procedures. Assessors meet learners' needs well, with flexible visits to cover different shift patterns.
- Partnerships are developing well. Assessors work productively with workplace managers and are developing good working relationships. A key partnership with another training provider has been effective in overcoming geographical challenges to support a large employer, enabling employees in the southern region to participate in learning.
- Support for learners is satisfactory. Resources for additional learning support are sufficient. Assessors develop good working relationships with learners. They make additional visits to meet learners' needs, for example where learners wish to be fast-tracked in their qualification. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory but sometimes lack sufficient focus on learners' development and career objectives.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Communication and reporting structures, including monthly staff meetings and weekly assessor reports, are effective. Staff induction and development are generally sufficient. However, systems to develop and monitor new staff recruited to meet significant increased learner numbers are not yet fully developed.
- Safeguarding arrangements are good. The Mid Counties Co-operative has good practices in relation to health, safety and security for learners and welfare arrangements are good. It also has designated employee representatives for any welfare concerns. Learners receive appropriate information in relation to safeguarding at induction and assessors reinforce this at reviews. However, learners' understanding is sometimes insufficient.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Employers and ATG have appropriate policies in relation to equality and diversity and programmes are open to all eligible employees. The learners' handbook provides useful information. However, recollection of information given at induction is often vague, and assessors do not sufficiently check learners understanding at reviews.
- Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory. Internal verification activities are effective in monitoring assessment, as well as learners' understanding of their programme. Standardisation meetings are productive for warehousing and are about to start for the new retail programme. The self-assessment report does not include sufficient specific judgements on the warehousing programme and ATG do not sufficiently involve staff in the self-assessment process.

What does ATG need to do to improve further?

- Improve planning to meet individual learning needs by more rigorous initial assessment of learners' prior experience and competence. Introduce relevant learning support materials for the new retail programme.
- Improve the quality of the review process by more focus on the overall learners' experience and better monitoring of learners' understanding of equality and diversity.
- Ensure information, advice and guidance at all stages have a sufficiently broad focus to include learners' learning and career objectives.
- Continue to develop quality assurance arrangements by introducing regular and effective retail standardisation activities. Also, further develop systems to support and monitor new staff, including freelance personnel, as well as ensuring better staff involvement in self-assessment.

Business administration and law

Grade 2

Context

25. Currently, 60 learners are on employer responsive programmes in business and administration. Of these, 32 are on apprenticeship programmes and 28 are working towards NVQs. Most are studying business administration, but a few are working towards team leading and management qualifications. Most learners are female and 22% are of minority ethnic heritage. All learners are employed and are assessed in the workplace.

Key findings

- Success rates are good and improving. The gap between overall and timely achievement has narrowed significantly in the last three years, and success rates during 2009/10 are well above national averages. Train to Gain achievements are particularly good, but numbers are small. Key skills success rates have improved and are good. Learners are very well motivated, producing high quality portfolios.
- Learners develop good skills. Their communication, customer service and team-working improve quickly. They increasingly use their own initiative and take on additional responsibilities. Some make persuasive presentations to colleagues on topics such as the environmental benefits of recycling and eliminating waste. They gain greater insights about organisations and their role, acquiring good job-specific technical skills. Some are quickly promoted.
- Learners feel safe. They understand what constitutes bullying and harassment, and know how to report inappropriate behaviour. Trainers and assessors promote equality and diversity issues satisfactorily at induction. Risk assessments of work placements are thorough, and learners are aware of issues such as internet safety and data protection.
- Coaching and learning are good. The highly-experienced assessors skilfully guide and encourage learners through the programme on their regular visits to the workplace. Assessors are thoroughly conversant with the learners and their job roles. Learners enjoy their learning, which enhances their knowledge and understanding of processes, and challenges their ways of working. Key skills are integrated well with vocational learning.
- Vocational resources for learners working towards NVQ at level 3 are insufficient. Some learners have no textbook. The intranet is insufficiently developed to provide online learning materials, although this is planned. Learning resources for learners working towards NVQ at level 2 are satisfactory. Online key skills materials are satisfactory and assessors are well qualified to support learners.
- Assessment is flexible and thorough. Assessment practices on NVQ courses are sound, and assessors make good use of questioning and professional

discussion. Learners use their e-portfolios competently, and assessors quickly return work learners send online, giving constructive comments on how to improve. Learners participate fully in the assessment process. Assessment planning is particularly good. Initial assessment is satisfactory.

- Individual learning plans are not used effectively to personalise learning. Long-term goals are not individualised and target completion dates are the same for all units. Few plans record personal goals adequately, and most do not specify how identified barriers will be addressed. Short-term target setting at progress reviews is good. Where employers are fully involved in progress reviews, learners are motivated to complete their qualifications more quickly.
- A good range of course options meet learners' and employers' needs well. NVQs are linked well to job roles. Many learners access additional qualifications through employer training. Highly responsive assessors meet employer requests and visit conveniently to fit work patterns. They adjust options flexibly to suit learner and employer needs when job roles change.
- ATG has particularly good, longstanding partnerships with large employers in public, private and voluntary sectors, as well as local schools, providers, funding bodies and connexions. It strongly promotes apprenticeship opportunities, working closely with the National Apprenticeship Service to match potential apprentices with the most appropriate employers. Assessors advise employers well on how to blend public and privately-funded training.
- Overall support is very effective. Learners achieve faster through well-targeted interventions. Learners with identified additional needs receive good support for numeracy, literacy and dyslexia from assessors or specialist staff. Identification of potential early leavers and support for them has much improved. ATG uses good links with external agencies to signpost learners for specialist counselling. Advice and guidance are effective.
- Operational management is good, and strategies to drive up achievement rates have been successful. Managers and assessors focus more closely on learners' progress and closely monitor and support learners at risk of leaving. Internal communications are good, and teams regularly share information and best practice. Staff development is good, although too few staff yet have training or teaching qualifications.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Most learners have satisfactory understanding, particularly when they have attended courses in the workplace. Learners' complaints are dealt with effectively. However, although assessors have received recent training, they do not discuss equality and diversity enough during assessment and reviews.
- ATG has made many improvements since the previous inspection. Managers monitor and support assessors better through monthly individual meetings and better use of data. Regular observations have improved the monitoring of key training processes. Internal verification is robust. Files are audited regularly for compliance, but the consistency of learning plans and long-term target setting is still variable.

What does ATG need to do to improve further?

- Continue to develop a virtual learning environment to provide accessible learning resources.
- Improve the consistency of individual learning plans across assessors to help them personalise learning and support.
- Develop staff use and understanding of data to plan learning, and increase learners' understanding of equality of opportunity through celebration of diversity.

Information about the inspection

26. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and six additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's head of quality improvement, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local skills funding agency, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
27. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

ATG

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	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners	600	600
Full-time learners		
Part-time learners		
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	2	
Outcomes for learners	2	2
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2	
How well do learners progress?	2	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2	
How safe do learners feel?	2	
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	2	
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	2	
Quality of provision	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?	1	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3	
Leadership and management	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2	
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	2	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	3	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2	
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?	2	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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