

# Aspiration Training (England)

Inspection report

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Name of lead inspector: Maxine Mayer HMI

Last day of inspection: 23 July 2010

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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## Information about the provider

1. Aspiration Training (England) Limited (ATEL) based in Bromsgrove, Worcestershire was established in 2007. Before this, the company was the regional arm of Aspiration Training Limited, which had centres in both England and Wales. ATEL recruits most of its learners through their employers across all of the West Midlands and around the Bristol area in the southwest. Programmes are funded through the Skills Funding Agency and account for 90% of the company's business.
2. Six hundred and two learners are either undertaking a programme in early years or health and social care with equal numbers in each. Approximately 60% of the learners are on Train to Gain programmes and the remainder are apprentices. Learners in early years have training off the job in workshops and assessment in their workplaces. Learners in health and social care have both their learning and assessment in workplace settings.
3. Since the last inspection, ATEL has re-organised its management structure and is withdrawing from Train to Gain provision in the southwest.
4. ATEL provides training on behalf of the following providers:
  - Stroud College of Further Education
  - Worcester College of Technology

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Employer provision:	
Train to Gain	373 learners
Apprenticeships	323 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	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	3
Equality and diversity	3
Subject Areas	Grade
Health, social care and public services	3

## Overall effectiveness

5. The overall effectiveness of the provider is satisfactory. Overall learners make satisfactory progress and are satisfactorily successful in their programmes. Learners do well in early years provision and while learners in health and social care are not succeeding as well, this is improving.
6. Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. Workshop classes for early years learners are well organised and learners enjoy this aspect of their training. Assessment is satisfactory and all learners receive satisfactory advice and guidance.
7. The recently restructured management team is setting high standards and many aspects of the provision are improving, though insufficient attention is being given to the views of stakeholders. The provider has satisfactory arrangements for safeguarding young people and the promotion of equality and diversity

## Main findings

- Overall success rates are satisfactory. In 2008/09, overall success rates for apprenticeship programmes were around national rates at 71%. The number of apprentices completing within the allotted time was just below the national rate. Train to Gain learners were slow in achieving their qualification and success rates were below the national rate. All programmes have improved this year and are now satisfactory.
- Learners are gaining good skills and increased confidence. Learner progress is satisfactory and much improved during 2009/10. In previous years, there was some slow progress for learners on the Train to Gain health and social care programmes. The provider has addressed this and the latest 2009/10 published data confirms that these learners now progress satisfactorily.
- The quality of teaching, training and assessment are satisfactory overall. Initial assessment is generally used effectively to plan for learning and assessment. However, there is insufficient attention to individual learning needs and target setting does not extend to wider personal and development goals. Most learners are unaware of their initial assessment scores. Arrangements for internal verification are satisfactory.
- Workshop sessions match the needs and interests of early years learners well. Learners enjoy meeting with others and sharing experiences of different workplaces. Tutors organise group learning well to help learners develop new knowledge and skills. However, not all learners have the opportunity to attend group learning. Portfolios are well organised and contain a satisfactory standard of work.
- Assessors use technology well to record assessment. However, learners do not receive enough encouragement to develop their skills in using information and communication technology (ICT) and ICT resources are insufficiently used to support learning.
- Assessors provide good personal support for learners. Most learners are aware of the level of progress they are making and what they have to do to complete their course. There are too few opportunities for learners to participate in pre-employment and enrichment activities to improve their learning and development.
- Resources to support learning are satisfactory. Training materials are of a satisfactory standard and generally used well by trainers. ATEL have developed a useful workbook to increase learners' knowledge. However, not all learners have access to textbooks. A few of the rooms used for training are inadequate. Assessors promote equality and diversity well in lessons.
- The board of directors together with the senior management team provide strong leadership. Strategic planning and financial management are good. This has led to significant recent improvements to the benefit of learners. Close monitoring of assessor activity is particularly effective in supporting assessors and improving the learning process.
- Safeguarding of learners is satisfactory. All staff are criminal record bureau checked and the provider holds a central list of these records. Staff training

have recently received safeguarding training and more is planned. The arrangements for the promotion of safeguarding to learners are satisfactory.

- ATEL's approach to equality and diversity is satisfactory. All staff receives on-going training and promotion in the workplace to learners is satisfactory. The provider uses data well in order to identify participation and success of under-represented groups and has been successful in improving the participation of males and minority ethnic learners.
- Engagement with users is under-developed. Consultation with employers and learners is insufficient. While learners are surveyed annually to assist in the self-assessment process, there is no employer engagement strategy, nor is employer feedback gathered sufficiently frequently.
- ATEL provides satisfactory value for money. Most staff and learners use an appropriate range of learning resources. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. However, there is inadequate access for some learners to information communications technology and other learning resources.

### What does ATEL need to do to improve further?

- To continue to improve the success rates of the health and social care learners within their planned duration of programme by implementing the identified changes to the off the job programme delivery.
- Improve the quality of learning on employers' premises by ensuring all employers provide suitable locations for meetings, reviews and discussions. Ensure rooms used for group teaching and training are equipped with suitable resources, including access to information and communication technology.
- To further improve target setting with learners. Targets should be negotiated and agreed between learners and assessors and these should include set targets for wider personal and career goals. Clear timescales should be set with sufficient detail provided to help learners' progress.
- To devise and implement pre-employment and enrichment activities, particularly for younger learners by developing broader learning opportunities.
- Continue to provide good leadership and support to staff by the close monitoring of performance and the progress of learners.
- Ensure that consultation with users takes place by implementing effective strategies to engage with learners and employers and involving users in decision-making activities.

### Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

#### What learners like:

- that our assessors help us in our performance at work
- the gains in confidence
- the enjoyable training
- the availability of assessors

- that we can progress to higher qualifications
- the supportive assessors
- the pace of the work.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the amount and quality of information given at the start of the programme
- the amount of help with numeracy.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- that ATEL are thorough in the way they work
- that assessors are reliable
- that we get good feedback from assessors
- that our staff gets good support from their assessors.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the formal links with ATEL
- the involvement in reviews
- the communication with ATEL when there are changes to delivery methods.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

8. ATEL's capacity to improve is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, learner numbers have increased considerably. The grades awarded at the last inspection have been maintained and the inadequate contributory grade awarded for equality of opportunity and diversity has improved and is now satisfactory.
9. The provider has increased its success rates each year since the last inspection and maintained the good success rates in the early years provision. However, success rates and the numbers of learners completing within planned time scales in health and social care provision are low and have not kept pace with national rates. However, ATEL has made considerable improvements to the health and social care programme and the overall management of provision. These management actions are having a significant positive impact on the learners' experience. For example, technical certificate pass rates are much improved and key skills within the apprenticeship programmes are being achieved in a timelier manner.
10. Self-assessment is satisfactory and the process is suitably inclusive of the analysis of data and staff views but not external stakeholders. The report is insufficiently self-critical. Development planning is used as a useful tool in order to improve the provision

### Outcomes for learners

Grade 3

11. Outcomes for learners are satisfactory. Overall success rates in apprenticeship programmes have improved each year since the last inspection and in 2008/09 at 71% were around national rates with a satisfactory number of learners completing within the allotted time. Not all groups of learners succeed as well as each other and there are also regional variations. For instance, success rates for early years learners are better than those in health and social care. The provider has identified this issue and has taken appropriate steps to address differences in performance; for instance, learners with learning disabilities/difficulties are given greater support earlier in their programme. Where regional performance has been poor, the provider has either significantly reduced its provision in that area or enhanced support for staff and learners.
12. Learners are gaining good skills, increasing confidence and are making satisfactory progress overall. Until 2008/09, health and social care Train to Gain learners were not completing within the planned duration of their programme. During 2009/10, this has much improved and these learners are now completing on time at the national average. Learners satisfactorily improve their economic well-being. Learners use their acquisition of qualifications to secure employment and gain promotion. Learners in early years usually progress from NVQ level two to level three qualifications

13. ATEL pay good attention to health and safety. Learners adopt safe working practices in their workplaces and feel safe.

## The quality of provision

Grade 3

14. The overall quality of provision is satisfactory. Teaching, training and assessment are satisfactory. Workshop sessions attended by early years learners match their needs and interests well. Learners enjoy meeting with other learners and sharing experiences and interests. Learning in groups is well organised and helps learners develop new knowledge and skills. Tutor/assessors promote equality and diversity well. However, not all learners have the opportunity to attend group learning. Learners take pride in their work. Overall standards are satisfactory in meeting the requirements of their qualifications
15. Resources to support learning are satisfactory. Training materials are of a satisfactory standard and assessors use them well to benefit learners. ATEL have developed a useful workbook to increase learners' knowledge. However, not all learners, particularly in the southwest have access to textbooks. A few of the rooms used for training are inadequate; some of those used for individual interviews and reviews at employers' premises are too small, uncomfortable or too public. Rooms used for group sessions away from employers' premises lack access to suitable ICT resources and the majority of learners do not receive enough encouragement to develop their skills in using ICT
16. Electronic assessment is good and satisfactory when paper-based. The use of technology to record and compile e-portfolios is good. However, learners do not have remote access to their portfolio. Assessors are flexible, many have relevant subject knowledge and sector skills. Learners look forward to meeting with their assessors because they find the experience rewarding. However, assessed work does not always indicate how learners can improve their work and errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling are not identified sufficiently well. Arrangements for internal verification on all programmes are well organised and thorough.
17. For current learners staff use initial assessment effectively to plan the pace and sequence of training and programme activities. This supports progress and completion within the allotted time. However, staff give insufficient attention to planning and negotiating individual learning needs. Target setting does not extend to wider personal and development goals.
18. The provision overall satisfactorily meets the needs and interests of users. Arrangements for early years learners are generally of a higher quality than those for learners on care programmes. For example, childcare learners receive textbooks, have the option to attend workshops and have generally greater challenges from more stimulating learning experiences.



19. Arrangements for partnership working are satisfactory. The established partnerships with local colleges, a school and other training providers promotes sharing of ideas, good practice and resources.
20. The provision of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. Learners receive useful and timely information about their options and the next stage in their training. Assessors provide good personal support for learners, which is valued by both learners and employers. Arrangements for supporting learners with literacy and numeracy needs have improved recently and are now satisfactory. However, there are too few opportunities for learners to participate in enrichment activities to improve their learning and development.

## Leadership and management

Grade 3

21. The directors together with the new senior management team provide good leadership. The clear strategic planning and careful financial management have led to significant recent improvements and benefits for learners. Managers make good use of accurate information to track and improve learner progress and support assessors. Communication within ATEL is good. Meetings are regular, well attended and across a wide range of activities, ensuring ATEL staff work cohesively as a team. Staff are appropriately qualified and are positive about recent changes, particularly recent improvements in communication and management of the company. ATEL makes good use of continuous professional development to up-skill and support staff especially when their roles change within the organisation. Close monitoring of assessor activity is particularly effective in supporting assessors and improving learner progress.
22. Safeguarding of learners is satisfactory. All staff are criminally record bureau checked (CRB) and ATEL hold central records. All staff have undertaken recent training which built on previous child and vulnerable adult protection training. Two senior staff have recently qualified as safeguarding training facilitators and are conducting further training to all staff imminently including e-safety. The promotion of safeguarding within the organisation and to learners is strong. Safeguarding is discussed and promoted to learners at every review and is a standing item at all weekly and monthly team meetings.
23. The providers' approach to equality and diversity is satisfactory and much improved since the last inspection. Policies and procedures meet legislative requirements and include specific procedures for harassment and bullying and learner concerns and complaints. The provider undertakes good analysis of the participation and success rates of under-represented groups. ATEL has identified where different groups of learners are not well represented or succeeding as well as others and is taking appropriate actions to address this. For example, ATEL use recruitment campaigns to successfully improve the participation of males and minority ethnic groups and to raise awareness amongst employers of the benefit of a diverse work force. All staff receive on-going monthly awareness training in topical equality and diversity issues, which are then discussed at reviews with learners. Development planning to further

improve the promotion of equality and diversity is well devised and on target for completion within identified timescales.

24. Engagement with users is under-developed. Consultation with employers and learners is insufficient. While learners are surveyed annually to assist in the self-assessment process, there is no employer engagement strategy, nor is feedback gathered sufficiently frequently. ATEL recognises this and has recently devised appropriate improvement plans, which include an increase in obtaining learner evaluations of off-the-job training sessions and the establishment of learner and employer forums. Use of external partnerships is satisfactory.
25. Self-assessment is satisfactory and ATEL makes good use of this to improve its provision. The process is effective as a component part of ATEL's quality improvement procedures. Observation of teaching and learning and other key learning processes is satisfactory. However, observers award too many higher grades than the lesson warrants, this is in part due to poorly defined criteria for making judgements. ATEL use the outcomes of these and other monitoring procedures effectively to self-assess their programmes. The most recent self-assessment report is fully inclusive of staff and learner views and includes good use of data analysis. However, it is not sufficiently self-critical and inspectors did not agree with the grades awarded by the provider for most of the provision. Staff use the resulting quality development plan effectively to increase overall success rates for apprentices, improving arrangements for off-the-job training and learner progress.
26. ATEL manages its resources appropriately and provides satisfactory value for money. Staff development promotes value for money well through effective sharing of information on training and good practice. ATEL has sound purchasing procedures with careful consideration for both cost and quality. The provider is committed to managing its resources in a sustainable way and has numerous initiatives to encourage recycling by staff and learners.

## Information about the inspection

27. Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's managing director (England), 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 Skills Funding Agency, the previous inspection report and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
28. 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 the subject area the provider offers.

**Record of Main Findings (RMF)**  
**Aspiration Training (England) Limited**  
 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		
Full-time learners	602	602
Part-time learners	0	0
Overall effectiveness	3	3
Capacity to improve	3	
Outcomes for learners	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?	3	
How safe do learners feel?	3	
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	n/a	
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	n/a	
Quality of provision	3	3
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	3	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3	
Leadership and management	3	3
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?*	n/a	
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?	3	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	4	
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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