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Mr Andy Heseltine  
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Dear Mr Heseltine

### **Short inspection of Achieve Through Learning Limited (ATL)**

Following the short inspection on 19 to 20 January 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since you were judged to be good in February 2011.

#### **This provider continues to be good.**

Since their last inspection in 2011, ATL has re-focused the provision from what was stand-alone national vocational qualifications (NVQs) to a mixture of work-based, classroom-based and full apprenticeships. They target all of the current provision at adult learners, most of whom are employed. ATL has managed this transformation well and in particular, has maintained good success rates across all types of delivery.

Most of the strengths from the last inspection still apply but now relate to a different type of provision and include some additional strengths. Managers have addressed most of the recommendations identified at the last inspection, although they still need to implement the observation of teaching, learning and assessment process fully.

The range and types of programmes on offer have grown steadily and plans are in place for this to continue. After an initial period where the pace of change was slow because of the arrangements between the former and the new owners, Leeds College of Building (LCB), the rate of change is now starting to accelerate.

LCB has recruited new managers and senior staff and they are having a positive impact. Employers and learners value the partnership and the quality of provision offered by ATL. Many employers identify the improved quality of the skills of their workforce when they have completed their training with ATL and the significant impact this has on their business.

## **Safeguarding is effective.**

The leadership team has ensured that safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and they take appropriate action to safeguard learners. In 2015, ATL undertook a detailed risk assessment and developed an action plan that focused on addressing the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty. Although they have tried on several occasions to engage with an identified representative from the local authority to work together to meet the 'Prevent' agenda, the local authority has not yet responded positively.

Training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty has effectively improved the knowledge and understanding of the issues by staff and learners. Learners demonstrate a good understanding of safeguarding, health and safety and the dangers of extremism. ATL has also started to include coverage of British values in a work assignment as part of the functional English programme.

## **Inspection findings**

- ATL has a clear sense of direction and purpose, confirmed since its acquisition by LCB in 2012 and have shared this with staff through a closely monitored and detailed three-year development plan. Supported by senior managers from LCB, the managers and staff at ATL have a good understanding of the organisation's plans for growth. College governors and senior managers scrutinise progress in meeting objectives closely and provide appropriate, informed challenge.
- A thorough review of programme delivery has ensured that ATL has managed its transition from stand-alone NVQs to apprenticeships well. ATL has benefited from LCB's experience in apprenticeship delivery and the support of its senior managers to appoint a small team of key staff to lead aspects such as functional skills and quality improvement. However, managers need to consider further expansion of this team given ATL's plans for programme development and growth.
- Managers have a good understanding of the priorities for improvement and they use this knowledge well to drive improvements and to target support. Actions to improve the quality of programme delivery are included in both improvement and business development plans; managers monitor progress against both plans routinely, with the ambition to be outstanding.
- Contractual arrangements following the purchase by LCB delayed the progress in appointing a new team to manage the development of the company. This has led to delays in streamlining quality improvement arrangements and ensuring that they fully met areas for improvement, such as the strengthening of arrangements to observe learning to include learner reviews, identified at the last inspection.
- The self-assessment report lacks detail and does not provide a full or sufficiently critical appraisal of ATL's provision.

- ATL's safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements and are effective. The company has clear policies and processes in place to manage any concerns raised by staff and learners. ATL leaders have been updating these appropriately since July 2015 to include 'Prevent' duty requirements and are vigilant about risks including radicalisation and extremism. Staff and learners are knowledgeable about aspects of safeguarding and know what to do if they have any concerns.
- ATL staff promote health and safety very effectively and learners and staff are diligent in working and learning safely. ATL is in the process of completing its action plan for changes in response to 'Prevent' duty requirements.
- While ATL meets the required standards for safeguarding and staff take effective measures to see that learners are safe, its current policy does not explicitly include reference to information technology and internet risks. The policy also does not include formal risk assessments for adult learners and staff working in isolation.
- Leaders and managers effectively promote equality and diversity to all staff, employers and learners well and demonstrate their commitment through the staff recruitment processes. Staff integrate equality and diversity into learning and assessment very effectively at learner induction training, progress reviews and, increasingly, during teaching activities.
- ATL leaders recently provided all staff with high-quality learning and development on a diverse range of current themes such as sexual orientation, transgenderism and working with learners with dyslexia.
- ATL leaders are not analysing data to ascertain patterns in early leavers and the performance by different groups of learners.
- The provider has successfully managed the additional requirements of training to meet the demands of the apprenticeship programme well. However, the pace of some of the changes implemented has been slow. Learners receive good support to improve their skills in English and mathematics. All learners, including those with subcontractors, now receive thorough initial assessment at an early stage in their apprenticeship.
- Assessors identify learners who need support well, such as those who speak English as a second language. These learners make good progress because of the assessor's effective planning to meet their individual needs and they now complete more speedily. For example, a Polish learner completed his apprenticeship within the expected time and has improved his language skills enabling him to communicate with his colleagues and to read stories to his daughter in English.
- Assessors ensure that initial assessment is timely and effective; this helps them to identify and plan effectively programme end dates that match well to apprentices' individual needs. Assessors also consult with employers to make sure dates and timescales fit with their business needs.
- Managers have created new processes to enable all assessors, including those with subcontractors, to plot and record the number of hours required for learners to undertake the various aspects of their framework, such as off-the-job training and guided learning hours.

- The new quality manager has usefully revised and simplified the language used in the NVQ workbooks to make it more accessible to learners.
- Staff development arrangements are good. Managers hold standardisation meetings each quarter and they now conduct annual appraisals each year. ATL has provided training in safeguarding, the 'Prevent' duty and equality and diversity recently.
- Leaders and managers use the new programmes very well to meet local, regional and national priorities. Managers develop employees' skills in line with government and regional priorities through an appropriately focused curriculum offer in key areas such as engineering, manufacturing and logistics and through the effective development of English and mathematics skills.
- Senior managers have worked effectively with partners from key regional and local groups and with employers to meet their specific needs. For example, by working mainly with small to medium employers. On their behalf, ATL successfully challenged the withdrawal of the warehousing qualification funding with the Skills Funding Agency.
- Success rates on both work-based and classroom-based learning have remained consistently high since the previous inspection, and are well above the current national averages.
- Although they declined slightly last year, apprentice success rates also remain good and are also significantly above national rates. The success rate of apprentices who complete within their planned time is also good.
- A good number of apprentices are successfully undertaking functional skills qualifications at a higher level than is required by their framework.
- Learners are developing good workplace skills and additional qualifications such as forklift truck and crane driving that bring benefits to their employers and their workplace. However, managers do not know the destination for over half of the early leavers or non-completers from programmes.

### **Next steps for the provider**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- they develop and improve the systems to monitor the progression and destination of early leavers so that they can then identify any common issues and devise strategies to reduce them
- leaders and managers improve the partnership working with the key local organisations such as the police and the local authority in relation to safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty to ensure that all aspects are fully supported
- the designated person updates the safeguarding policies to ensure that information technology and internet safety are explicitly included
- they monitor and evaluate the performance of different groups of learners to ensure that all groups achieve equally well

- all aspects of the new quality improvement arrangements for teaching, learning and assessment are fully implemented, including the observation process and that the subsequent action plans are effectively implemented and monitored closely
- the management team is extended to ensure it has sufficient capacity to support the planned growth and further development of programmes offered and to drive the improvement strategies effectively
- future self-assessments are more rigorous, evaluative and self-critical of all aspects of the provision including the performance of subcontractors.

Yours sincerely

Tim Gardner  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

Inspectors visited learners' employment sites and met with them and their employers as well as meeting with a range of ATL leaders, managers and staff. They also met with representatives from ATL's subcontractors and senior managers from Leeds College of Building. Inspectors also took every opportunity to review learners' work and evidence in their portfolios.