

# Accounting Training Technician Services Ltd

---

**Inspection date**

19 September 2007

---

**Inspection number**

316809

## Contents

<b>Background information .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Inspection judgements .....	3
Scope of the inspection .....	3
<b>Description of the provider .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Summary of grades awarded.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Overall judgement.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Effectiveness of provision .....	6
Capacity to improve .....	6
<b>Key strengths .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Key areas for improvement .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Main findings .....</b>	<b>8</b>
Achievement and standards .....	8
Quality of provision.....	8
Leadership and management .....	9
Equality of opportunity .....	9
<b>What learners like .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>What learners think could improve.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Learners' achievements .....</b>	<b>12</b>

## Background information

### Inspection judgements

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

#### Key for inspection grades

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

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

### Scope of the inspection

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

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

- Accounting and finance

## Description of the provider

1. Accounting Technician Training Services Ltd (ATTS) is a private training provider based in Birkenhead specialising in the training of accounting technicians. ATTS was established in 1988. It provides advanced apprenticeship and national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 4 training in accounting, funded by Greater Merseyside LSC. ATTS also provides privately funded training to local businesses. The LSC contract accounts for approximately 86% of its income. Learners are recruited after nomination by their employers, after referral by Connexions, in response to advertisements in the local press or following personal recommendation from existing and previous learners.
2. Currently there are 140 learners. There are 95 advanced apprentices, 47 learners undertaking NVQ level 2 and 48 at level 3. A further 45 learners are undertaking NVQ level 4. There are 95 learners who are funded by the LSC, 86 of these are students of ATTS, nine learners are subcontracted from another training provider. The remaining 45 learners are self-funding or funded by their employer. All learners are employed by organisations, mostly in the Wirral and Liverpool. Most work in accounting practices, others work in accounting departments of firms in the public and private sector. ATTS provides a recruitment service for some of these organisations. Most learners attend off-the-job training one day each week at the ATTS training centre. Others attend one or two evenings per week. All advanced apprentices work towards key skills qualifications at the appropriate level, although many are exempt because of prior achievements. Reviews of learners' progress take place every 12 weeks.
3. ATTS is owned by two directors and their spouses. The company is managed by the two directors who are both fully involved on a daily basis with delivering the training programme. Training and assessment is provided by the directors and three part-time teaching staff supported by one full-time and two part-time administrators.

## Summary of grades awarded

<b>Effectiveness of provision</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
<b>Achievement and standards</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
<b>Equality of opportunity</b>	<b>Satisfactory: Grade 3</b>

## Sector subject area

<b>Accounting and finance</b>	<b>Good: Grade 2</b>
-------------------------------	----------------------

## Overall judgement

### **Effectiveness of provision**

#### **Good: Grade 2**

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Achievement and standards, the quality of provision and leadership and management are all good. Provision in business administration and law is also good. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

### **Capacity to improve**

#### **Good: Grade 2**

5. ATTS has demonstrated a good capacity to maintain its high standard of training and to improve it further. Feedback from learners and employers combined with innovation and ideas from staff are the principal methods of driving improvement. ATTS responds quickly and effectively to feedback to improve the provision. Feedback is also used from other quality improvement systems such as observation, internal verification, and quality audits to inform improvements. Weaknesses identified in the previous inspection have been addressed.
6. A formal self-assessment process is carried out annually leading to a self-assessment report and development plan. The process allows all staff to contribute and the views of learners and employers are taken into account. Inspection findings confirmed most of the grades given in the report although they awarded a lower grade for equality of opportunity than ATTS. Most strengths and areas for improvement identified during inspection are identified in the self-assessment report.

## Key strengths

- Good success rates
- Good development of workplace skills
- Good learner progression

- Good teaching
- Good links with employers
- Effective support for learners
- Good monitoring of learners' progress
- Good use of feedback to improve provision

## Key areas for improvement

- Inadequate target-setting in learner progress reviews
- Inadequately documented processes
- Insufficient planning of on-the-job training

## Main findings

### Achievement and standards

#### Good: Grade 2

7. ATTS achieves good success rates on its advanced apprenticeship and NVQ level 4 courses. Framework success rates have been consistently good at 76% in 2003-04 and 75% in 2005-06, although the rate fell to 65% in 2004-05. Timely success rates are satisfactory. Learners are making good progress towards their qualification.
8. Learners develop good workplace skills. Most learners have the opportunity to apply their learning within their workplace. They develop a wide range of skills and the confidence to apply them in their job. Learners make good progress in their job roles and quickly assume greater responsibility at work. Many achieve promotion within their organisation and some progress to more responsible job roles in other organisations.
9. The progression of learners to higher level qualifications is good. Progression from advanced apprenticeship to NVQ level 4 has increased from 88% in 2004-05 to 100% in 2006-07. A high proportion of learners leaving ATTS as qualified accounting technicians continue with their studies. In 2005-06, 49% of learners progressed to professional accountancy studies. For learners studying during the period 2006-07 progression has increased to 53%.
10. ATTS' self-assessment report provides an accurate description and judgement of learners' achievements.

### Quality of provision

#### Good: Grade 2

11. The quality of provision is good. This is recognised in the self-assessment report. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching sessions are well-planned and supported by appropriate learning materials. The better sessions are well-paced and use a wide variety of teaching and learning techniques. These sessions are lively and interesting and learners are actively involved and contribute well to the sessions. Learners produce a good standard of work. Trainers and assessors are qualified accountants. The teaching staff are not teacher trained, although two staff are currently working towards teacher training qualifications. Learners are assessed regularly throughout their programme and assessment is well-planned. Learners benefit from good written and oral feedback which helps them to improve their work. The evidence in learners' portfolios is satisfactory and includes appropriate work-based evidence. Off-the-job training is well-structured and well-planned.
12. ATTS has good links with employers. ATTS is a highly respected provider of accounting training in the locality. The company has productive long-term relationships with many employers. Employers have a good understanding of the content of the framework and understand how they can support their staff as they work towards their qualification. Employers give learners opportunities to develop their job roles to support their learning. Communication with employers is good, and attendance reporting is done well.

13. Guidance and support for learners are good. Learners benefit from good personal support. Staff provide individual support on request to learners. Staff are very approachable and provide good support on personal, work and study problems. If learners miss lessons, staff will fax, email or post missed work. Staff respond rapidly to solve problems. ATTS provide good career advice and guidance. The experienced staff regularly provide useful career and progression advice to learners. A part-time member of staff is qualified to provide skills for life support and the arrangements for providing literacy, numeracy and language support are satisfactory.
14. Programmes and activities are well designed to meet learners' needs and interests. All learners attend a well-structured induction during which they receive comprehensive information about the requirements of the programme. Induction prepares learners well for accounting work and covers the occupational standards, assessment requirements and portfolio-building. Equality and diversity are covered using a range of interesting material and a variety of teaching and learning methods.
15. Progress reviews are held every 12 weeks. The reviews involve the employer and the learner although in many cases the employer and learner do not meet with the reviewer in a tripartite discussion. Target-setting in learner progress reviews is inadequate. The reviews do not include a clear action plan detailing actions to be completed by the learner and employer. Learners and employers are not normally provided with a copy of the completed review documentation.
16. On-the-job training is not always well co-ordinated with off-the-job training and is not well recorded. On-the-job training is insufficiently planned. The form intended to be used for this purpose has fallen into disuse. The progress review records make little reference to the training that is taking place in the workplace. Learners are busy at work but in some cases, there is insufficient influence by ATTS on the tasks they undertake and the breadth or depth of their on-the-job training.

## **Leadership and management**

**Good: Grade 2**

### **Equality of opportunity**

Satisfactory: Grade 3

17. Leadership and management are good, as recognised in the company's self-assessment report. ATTS is well led and the training is effectively managed by the two directors and the staff. The directors have focused on maintaining the good quality of their provision and their reputation with employers. The small size of the organisation allows them and the staff to have a good knowledge of each learner and the progress they are making. ATTS have good systems to monitor the progress of individual learners

effectively. They use wall charts to record the units of the qualifications as they are achieved. Most learners progress at a similar rate but those who are falling behind are readily identified. Staff give additional support where appropriate. They have regular informal discussions about the progress of individual learners and once each term they hold a formal meeting with all staff at which the progress of individual learners is discussed. Concerns about any learners in difficulty are discussed and recorded. Progress review forms record in detail the progress the learners are making in their on-the-job training and employers are kept well informed.

18. The principal source of quality improvement is feedback from learners, employers and staff. Feedback from learners and employers is collected systematically and is used effectively. Teacher assessment questionnaires add to the feedback that is collected from learners. Additional practical work in off-the-job training has been added to one part of the programme as a result of feedback from learners. Emailing material to students when they miss a session has increased attendance because they have the opportunity to catch up before the next session. This improvement was drawn from feedback from staff.
19. The move to new premises has been completed without any disruption to the learners. The premises has much improved facilities with more spacious teaching rooms. Absence through illness by key staff has also been managed effectively with no negative impact on the learners. The company now has a satisfactory staff training and development policy and plan, a weakness at the previous inspection. Staff training needs are reviewed each year and training is undertaken. Currently none of the tutors have a teaching qualification but two are close to completion.
20. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Male and female learners are recruited and succeed in roughly equal numbers. The number of minority ethnic learners is approximately in line with the local community. No specific measures have been required to promote the training to particular groups. Learners with disabilities have been enrolled and supported and there is a good understanding amongst staff of the needs of people with disabilities. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of equality of opportunity.
21. Many of the processes are inadequately documented and recorded. The directors regard them as a lower priority than the time they spend in contact with learners, particularly in the previous year when staff and management resources have been stretched. For example, attendance by learners has not been analysed effectively and the equal opportunities policy has not been updated.

## What learners like:

- 'The teaching is good, the teachers are approachable and explain things really well'
- Staff are really helpful and supportive
- 'We have a good relationship with the staff'
- 'I can phone, email or call in, the staff are always there to help me'
- 'The new premises are much better'
- Valuable revision time

## What learners think could improve:

- Action points to be completed on the portfolio aren't always followed up
- 'It would be useful to have a copy of the completed review forms'

## Annex

## Learners' achievements

Success rates on **work-based learning 'apprenticeship' programmes** managed by the provider 2004 to 2006

Programme	End Year	Success rate	No. of learners*	Provider/college NVQ rate**	National NVQ rate**	Provider/college framework rate**	National framework rate**
Advanced Apprenticeships	03-04	overall	41	85	46	76	28
		timely	42	74	30	64	18
	04-05	overall	23	83	47	65	31
		timely	27	56	35	48	23
	05-06	overall	40	75	56	75	49
		timely	41	54	37	54	32

\* Learners who leave later than originally planned are counted in the year they actually leave. This group of learners are then added to the learners who planned to complete in a given year and did so or left earlier than planned

\*\* College and national qualification success rates are calculated using LSC published data derived from the 'Individual Learning Record'