

# Access to Music Ltd

## Independent learning provider

<b>Inspection dates</b>		<b>4–8 March 2013</b>
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good-2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory-3
Outcomes for learners		Good-2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-2

### Summary of key findings for learners

#### This provider is good because:

- A very high proportion of learners achieve their qualifications in English and mathematics.
- The large majority of learners achieve their music and music technology qualifications.
- Learners make good progress in their studies and apprentices in their personal development as professionals in employment.
- Learners develop good music industry and technology skills in teaching sessions and at events arranged by the provider. They develop good skills in English and mathematics.
- Learners benefit from teachers' excellent vocational expertise and knowledge of the music industry.
- Teaching, learning and assessment overall are good across all of the learning centres.
- The support learners receive in classes and between teaching sessions, and in the work place is particularly effective.
- Good leadership exists at a senior level and at all centres.
- The quality of learning is rigorously monitored and improved.

#### This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Achievement is low on a very small minority of learning programmes.
- The poor punctuality of learners in a small minority of learning sessions impacts negatively on learning.
- Insufficient theory is delivered to improve learners' knowledge and understanding of music.
- The use of assessment to check and extend learning is not always sufficiently effective.

## Full report

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Increase the success rates on apprenticeship programmes by making sure the good progress currently being made by apprentices result in their successful completion of the framework. Increase the success rates for the few learners taking additional short course qualifications.
- Improve the punctuality of learners. Place greater importance on developing learners' employability skills and develop strategies so that learners recognise the significance of punctuality. Ensure teachers challenge lateness more consistently.
- Continue the improvement in teaching, learning and assessment to increase the number of outstanding teaching sessions. Place a stronger focus on assessment and the checking of learning in teaching sessions. Improve assessment to help learners make informed steps in their learning. Ask more specific questions to check learning in teaching sessions.
- Continue to develop the teaching of theory at all levels in order to provide learners with a deeper understanding of composition and performance. Develop their music skills further and improve their employability prospects and progression possibilities.

### Inspection judgements

<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	Good
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- The very large majority of learners on English and mathematics courses at foundation and intermediate levels achieve their qualifications. Success rates on the main vocational programmes delivered at all the learning centres are higher than for similar providers and have improved consistently over the last three years. The large majority of learners achieve their music qualifications and learning objectives. The large majority of those learners who do not complete all their planned learning objectives still achieve a full qualification. Success rates on higher education courses are high. No discernible difference in achievement exists between different groups of learners. Success rates on a small number of short courses are low and require improvement.
- Apprenticeship success rates declined for one year in 2011/12 and are low. The company has taken swift action and changed its apprenticeship delivery. The progress of current apprentices on the smaller revised apprenticeship programme is good. All apprentices are on track to complete the apprenticeship qualification ahead of or at their planned end date.
- Attendance rates on vocational learning programmes overall are satisfactory. Behaviour at all the centres is good. However, learners' punctuality in a minority of teaching sessions requires improvement. It impacts on learning when several learners arrive at different times after the start of the session and they miss the introduction or details of a planned activity. It affects collaborative work in teaching sessions. In addition, the expectation of being on time generally is of paramount importance in the industry and teachers need to help learners recognise this.
- Learners gain good, and in a minority of cases outstanding, music industry and music technology, English and mathematics skills. Apprentices gain good employability skills in the workplace. Apprentices are contributing well to the productivity for example, in working with customers, producing web design that helps communicate the employer's business. They develop noticeable skills and confidence in communicating without supervision professionally and purposefully. At classes held at the learning centres learners enjoy their learning and demonstrate good collaborative skills. Learners acquire a good knowledge and understanding of music and technology. The standards of work that learners produce in music performance including recorded music are good.

- Learners on vocational learning programmes make good musical products and develop creative and original musical ideas. In a music technology lesson intermediate learners were able to select synth sounds and use descriptive vocabulary to explain the synthesizer's features and manipulate them creatively to create music in a range of genres. However learners develop insufficient theory of music skills to support their performance and compositions.
- Learners' achievements are celebrated well in the variety of enrichment opportunities available to learners nationally. They utilise opportunities to perform at a variety of gigs and festivals. They are prepared well for auditions that are advertised along with other employment opportunities on the provider's virtual learning environment (VLE).
- Progression from foundation through to intermediate and advanced learning programmes and to higher education at the provider is good. Progression to employment is satisfactory including permanent employment offered to apprentices following the completion of their apprenticeship.

<b>The quality of teaching, learning and assessment</b>	Good
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- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good and reflected in the outcomes for learners. Teachers prepare and implement teaching strategies well to meet learners' individual needs and train them for employment. On vocational learning programmes learners make good progress. Training on-the-job for apprentices is satisfactory.
- In the best sessions teachers manage learning and learners skilfully, and an air of mutual respect is evident. Learning is broken down into interesting and relevant tasks that engage and sustain learners' interest. Learners' different abilities are identified and catered for well and teachers provide extended exercises to stretch the more able. The best teachers use good questioning techniques, for example to cover relevant health and safety aspects or provide clear explanations of what is required to achieve distinction, merit and pass grades. Constant reference is made to the realities of the music business with an emphasis on what is required for success as performers, producers and other industry professionals. Teachers focus on the development of learners' skills to work as independent artists.
- Assessment is satisfactory. Initial assessment is fit for purpose. The marking of learners' vocational work generally provides them with clear information on what they need to do to improve further. Assessment of learning and progress on apprenticeships is consistent and thorough. However, the use of assessment to check and to extend learning in a minority of teaching sessions is not always sufficiently effective and teachers do not make use of a sufficiently wide range of assessment methods to measure small steps in learning. In a few sessions the use of questioning in group work is insufficiently effective with a small minority of often more able learners allowed to dominate discussions.
- Learners complete valuable learning tasks such as making videos and arranging and balancing digital sound that help them learn how to make products. They show good technical skills when they apply and manipulate digitally created music tracks and beats; for example in using specialised software, mixing techniques and using a compressor in mastering.
- Information learning technology (ILT) is integrated very well in most classes. A variety of resources are used imaginatively to support, develop and record learner and apprentices' work which is regularly uploaded onto the VLE for reference and analysis. In one session, the teacher captured a 'time line' of the evolution of digital recording on a camera that was instantly uploaded as a future resource for the learners. Excellent use is made of video resources on the internet to find exemplar material to enhance learning.
- Teachers have an excellent range of vocational expertise and knowledge; learners benefit from well informed answers to questions about the music industry for example. Teachers draw on their extensive experience well which helps to engage and motivate learners by making

informed anecdotal comparisons with real life experience during learning activities. Teachers are well qualified and experienced; many are current practitioners in the music business.

- A wide range of extra master classes are given by industry professionals that link with the curriculum effectively. At one centre a manager in the music industry and a professional guitarist came to talk to the learners giving them a good insight into the professional world.
- Learners generally receive excellent support, both in class and pastorally, which supports their progress and development very well. Teachers and tutors have a good understanding of learners’ individual needs. This involves much additional and effective work in the support and organising of events and gigs for learners’ performance, assessment and wider development. The care shown for learners, especially for those living away from home for the first time is particularly good. Health and Safety issues are recognised, often very well, at most centres.
- The teaching and learning in English, mathematics and information technology classes are good. In a marketing and promotion lesson for intermediate learners the teacher had prepared three different examples of band profiles to suit the different literacy levels within the group. In a functional skills class learners demonstrated good independence in calculating and reasoning when completing multiplication and subtraction tasks.
- Additional learning and pastoral support are good. One-to-one support sessions are good through well-established systems for apprentices and learners. Comprehensive reports provide tutors with useful progress and monitoring records. Apprentices’ progress in reviews is carefully monitored. Tutors monitor learners’ attendance and provide feedback to the teachers via regular meetings that share performance and progress of ‘at risk’ learners.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good at most centres. A strong culture of mutual support and respect exists. Assignments effectively incorporate themes such as ‘International Women’s Day’ and ‘Fair Trade’. Some excellent work is being done to challenge perceived gender stereotypes within the music industry.

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management</b>	Good
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- The Chief Executive sets a clear vision and direction for the organisation which is communicated very clearly to staff. This vision has a strong focus on providing high quality music learning programmes. The board of directors has an active involvement and a good understanding of the organisation and its performance. Senior managers, as well as managers at centres, demonstrate high levels of enthusiasm and ability. Communication is effective at all levels, including good use of on-line communication for weekly meetings with centre heads of learning. Business planning is very effective, with a recent restructuring resulting in very clear roles and responsibilities for staff. Each centre is set individual and challenging targets for performance that are disseminated effectively to teachers.
- Performance management is good. Each centre head of learning undergoes a formal, termly, performance management review, with close monitoring of targets. At each centre, managers effectively evaluate course performance, though the process is not yet standardised nationally. Managers use data well to monitor success rates and attendance. Staff development is effective, with a particularly good focus on achievement of formal teaching qualifications for staff at each centre.
- Senior managers have developed a very effective process for observing teaching and learning that has improved standards. Advanced teaching practitioners adopt a rigorous approach, with a strong focus on learning. All teachers receive clear actions to improve. Teachers and assessors receive good support to improve, including very effective support to share best practice with colleagues. The observation process is well established, teaching and learning is improving but is not yet outstanding.

- The company has a rigorous self-assessment process. Managers at each centre complete an annual self-assessment, including an interim report, and monitor quality improvement plans effectively. The company's self-assessment report is accurate, with clear judgements and good underpinning detail that supports the strengths and areas for improvement. A management team also completes internal inspections of the quality of provision at each centre every 18 months. This process is very thorough and provides staff with clear actions for improvement. Where underperformance is identified, a re-inspection takes place. Quality improvement action taken by senior managers has improved learning. For example, success rates in classroom-based learning have continually improved over the last three years. Functional skills attainment is particularly good; an area for improvement at the previous inspection.
- The collection and use of learners' feedback are good at each centre. Learners are encouraged to suggest improvements; new drum kits and improved rest areas are welcome examples of additions to centres following feedback from learners. Learners highly regard their learning experiences and their views are strongly conveyed in surveys. Examples of improvements that have been made are promoted well, via 'you said – we did' posters in centres.
- Leaders at all levels plan the curriculum to meet learners' needs well. New courses at foundation and higher education level have been introduced successfully. In addition, each regional centre is able to propose additional courses to meet local needs. The provision to develop learners' mathematics and English skills is good. Very good partnerships exist offering good work experience opportunities for learners. The quality and use of learning resources including specialist kit and technology are excellent at several sites. The resources on the VLE are very good and support learning well, including independent learning outside or during teaching sessions. Most learners value these learning resources, although not all learners find the VLE easy to navigate.
- Staff promote equality and diversity well. Positive posters and images are prevalent at centres and session plans now have more focus on embedding equality and diversity. Managers monitor the performance of different regions and groups of learners effectively. Managers have a strong focus on challenging stereotypes. Learners participate well with local fund-raising activities for charities. However, while the promotion of equality and diversity is good in most sessions, teachers sometimes miss opportunities to raise learners' awareness of different aspects of equality.
- Arrangements for ensuring learners' health and safety are good. The company meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners. Thorough health and safety checks are made of classrooms, as well as at external venues. The induction booklet has particular focus on health and safety in the music industry. E-safety is well-promoted, with clear guidance on staff/learner relationships, for example in relation to social networking. Good links exist with external agencies, who, for example, attend centres to raise awareness on the dangers of drugs. Ear protectors are provided to all learners to wear in sessions, though a small minority resist the wearing of these.

## Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Access to music Ltd									
<b>Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance:</b>  1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 Learning programmes	16-18 Learning programmes	19+ Learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Other work- based learning	Employability	Foundation Learning	Community learning
Outcomes for learners	2		2	2	3			2	
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2		2	2	3			2	
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2		2	2	3			2	

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Performing arts	2

## Provider details

Access to Music Ltd	
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	Full-time: 1,267
	Part-time: 230
CEO	Adrian Armstrong
Date of previous inspection	November 2009
Website address	<a href="http://www.accesstomusic.ac.uk">www.accesstomusic.ac.uk</a>

Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
<b>Full-time</b>	69	0	220	54	417	321	18	53
<b>Part-time</b>	27	10	11	0	0	0	3	79
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	0	0	59	51	0	0		
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	320							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Future Projects.</li> </ul>							

## Additional socio-economic information

Access to Music Limited was founded in 1992 and is a national provider predominantly of music learning. It offers vocational provision at foundation, intermediate, advanced levels up to higher education delivered at learning centres in nine cities including its head office in Birmingham. The company also provides workplace learning. Employability learners on work programmes funded by the Department for Work and Pensions were out of scope for this inspection. Most learners following learning programmes are male and white British. The majority of learners are aged 16 to 19.

## Information about this inspection

**Lead inspector**

Steven Stanley HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), six additional inspectors and two music specialists, assisted by the director for quality as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject area listed in the report above.



## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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