

# The British Racing School

## Inspection report

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**Unique reference number:** 50858

**Name of lead inspector:** Simon Cutting HMI

**Last day of inspection:** 06 August 2010

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

**Address:** The British Racing School  
Snailwell Road  
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## Information about the provider

1. The British Racing School (BRS) is a registered charity overseen by a board of trustees. Established in 1983, its role is to provide training for the horse racing industry. An estimated 600 licensed trainers and 7,000 full- and part-time staff work in the racing industry. In horse racing yards used by BRS, the number of horses in training has declined by about 35% in the last five years.
2. BRS offers training for apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in racehorse care. These programmes are funded by the Skills Funding Agency. Most learners start as apprentices and attend a nine week intensive residential pre-employment course before moving into employment in the horse racing industry. About a third of advanced apprentices are drawn from those who successfully complete the apprenticeship framework qualification. BRS sub contracts the provision of the breeding option of the NVQ level 2 in Racehorse Care to The National Stud. Year 10 and 11 pupils from local schools complete national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 1 and 2 in Racehorse Care. BRS provides a wide range of specialist courses for the racing industry. Government funded provision accounts for about 60% of the provider's business. BRS was last inspected in October 2005.
3. BRS recruits learners nationally. Work placements are mostly in rural areas where unemployment rates are lower than the national average. Only 24% of learners start their training having achieved five general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above. This is significantly lower than the national average of over 50%.
4. The following organisation provides training on behalf of the provider:
  - The National Stud

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
<b>Provision for young learners:</b> 14 to 16	20 part-time learners
<b>Employer provision:</b> Train to Gain Apprenticeships	11 learners 277 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
Equine Studies		2

## Overall effectiveness

- The overall effectiveness of BRS's provision is good. Outcomes for learners are good. Success rates are satisfactory. Learners make good progress and progression into employment is excellent. Practical training is very good but in a minority of theory sessions, teaching lacks inspiration. On-the-job training is insufficiently planned. Progress reviews and assessments take place regularly. Employers' involvement in on-the-job training, assessments and progress reviews is insufficient. The range of provision is excellent. The pre-employment residential course prepares learners extremely well for employment. BRS successfully finds employment for all learners through its very effective links with employers. Support for learners is good. However, arrangements to identify and meet additional learning needs at the start of the programme are weak. Leadership is very strong. Very committed staff work hard to raise learners' expectations and standards of work. The board of trustees provide good oversight of the business. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Arrangements for safeguarding learners are satisfactory. BRS's engagement with learners and employers is good. Value for money is very good.

## Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. The proportion of learners who complete their apprenticeship or advanced apprenticeship is satisfactory. Progression into employment is excellent. Progression to higher-level training is good.

- Learners develop excellent practical skills and very positive work ethics. They prepare well for work in the horse racing industry. Learners make good progress. They have a good understanding of health and safety and take responsibility for their own health and well-being.
- Teaching and learning are good. Practical training, with particular emphasis on riding skills, is very good. Tutors have very good industrial experience. They develop learners' key skills well through good use of horse racing topics. Resources are excellent. In a minority of theory sessions, teaching lacks inspiration and learners become bored.
- Opportunities for on-the-job training are very good, but planning of training is insufficient. A large majority of learners follow similar programmes regardless of their prior experience and employers are insufficiently involved.
- Progress reviews and assessments take place regularly but at level 2, apprentices have little ownership of these processes. Employers' involvement in preparing learners for assessments is limited. Progress reviews focus mostly on assessment. They do not provide learners with a clear action plan and concise targets.
- The range of provision is excellent. BRS offer a wide range of industry specific courses. The pre-employment residential course prepares learners extremely well for employment. BRS successfully finds jobs for all learners who complete this course through its very effective links with employers.
- Support for learners is good. Staff at BRS and workplace assessors provide good pastoral support. BRS responds well to learners' additional needs, particularly to help them develop their key skills. However, arrangements to identify and meet additional learning needs at the start of training are weak.
- Leadership is very strong. Very committed staff have shared ambitions and objectives. They bring a wealth of experience and hard work to raise learners' expectations and standards of work. Managers effectively monitor the detailed business planning and business performance. The board of trustees provide good oversight of the business.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. BRS makes particularly effective use of data. Recruitment plans ensure effective widening participation and the pre-employment course improves access for non-traditional learners.
- Arrangements for safeguarding learners are satisfactory. Enhanced Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks for staff are in place. BRS pay good attention to the welfare of apprenticeship learners on the residential nine-week course. BRS's arrangements to assure the welfare of learners in the workplace are insufficient.
- BRS's engagement with learners and employers is good. They respond quickly to resolve learners' concerns and improve performance. Managers' involvement in employer organisations ensure employers' views contribute to business performance.
- Value for money is very good. Financial management is strong and BRS's commitment to sustainability is good.

## **What does BRS need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the involvement of employers by ensuring they participate more fully in planning training, assessment decisions and reviewing learners' progress.
- Raise the standard of learners' progress reviews through increasing the focus on target setting, personal development, and reinforcement of health, welfare and equality and diversity.
- Improve initial and diagnostic assessments to plan and meet the literacy, numeracy, language and specialist learning needs of learners by making sure they take place from the start of their programme.
- Improve arrangements to assure the welfare of learners in the workplace through welfare related risk assessments and checks each learner's welfare at progress reviews.
- Increase success rates by more thorough monitoring of learners' performance and the development of more individualised learning programmes.
- Improve the quality of theory teaching by the use of learning strategies, which more effectively challenge and inspire learners.

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

### **What learners like:**

- very supportive staff
- the quality of the teaching and learning which helps put theory into practice
- the use of video recordings to help develop riding skills
- riding horses
- being well prepared for work in the horse racing industry
- being encouraged to improve fitness
- gaining qualifications leading towards becoming a jockey or trainer
- being surprised by their rate of progress and gains in confidence.

### **What learners would like to see improved:**

- the daily schedule to provide a suitable rest period
- opportunities to complete the apprentice programme more quickly
- split riding lessons to cater better for riders and non riders
- the time for completing key skills at BRS
- opportunities for learners aged over 18 to have more responsibility for decision making at BRS.

## **Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors**

### **What employers like:**

- first class communications, relations and support from BRS staff
- the pre-employment course which prepares learners very well for work
- the apprentices who are knowledgeable, thorough in their work and committed to the industry
- the strong emphasis on learners' professionalism and having the correct attitude to work
- that BRS is very well run as an organisation
- BRS's staff who are sensitive to employers' needs when attending assessments at yards and racing events
- BRS's very open responses to suggestions from employers to improve the relevance of the training.

### **What employers would like to see improved:**

- the updating of BRS staff to ensure their skills match current racing yard practices
- apprentices' attendance at race meetings during their training at BRS to see the industry at first hand.

## Main inspection report

### Capacity to make and sustain improvement

**Grade 2**

6. BRS's capacity to make and sustain improvement is good. The provision is good, with a few aspects that are outstanding. BRS is committed to quality improvement. Managers complete regular quality improvement activities. Managers and staff have successfully redesigned the pre-employment course. Learners receive improved pastoral support as they start their employment, with early signs of increasing retention rates. The provider uses lesson observations appropriately to improve the quality of teaching and learning. A lead assessor works with workplace assessors to improve standards of assessment. BRS has maintained the majority of the key strengths identified at the last inspection. However, they have made insufficient progress to improve learners' progress reviews.
7. BRS has a satisfactory self-assessment process. Arrangements for staff to contribute to the report are satisfactory. The self-assessment report is insufficiently evaluative. Inspectors identified additional strengths and areas for improvement. Apart from outcomes for learners, grades awarded were generous.
8. Business performance is monitored well and data on learners' performance is used very well. The quality improvement plan, which contains relevant areas for improvement, is effectively monitored and its implementation is progressing well. BRS responds quickly to resolve the concerns of both learners and employers.

### Outcomes for learners

**Grade 2**

9. Outcomes for learners are good. Overall success rates are satisfactory and, at around 66% in 2008/09, this was close to the national average. At 58% in 2008/09, the proportion of learners who achieve within the planned timescales was around the national average. Different groups of learners perform equally well. Learners' progression into sustained employment is excellent with many working in well paid jobs across the horse racing industry. Progression onto a work-based foundation degree is good.
10. Learners develop excellent practical skills and very positive work ethics. A large majority make quick progress and develop good abilities to ride high calibre horses at industry standards. During the intensive pre-employment training period at the BRS, and when employed at racing yards, learners engage in a broad range of relevant duties. A majority attend race meetings within a few weeks of starting their apprenticeship.
11. Learners have a good awareness of health, safety and well being. Learners adopt good safe working practices. They state that they feel safe and are

particularly positive about the camaraderie and friendships they make during their initial nine weeks at the BRS. The promotion of health and well-being during this initial period is good. Learners have very good recall of training on diet, physical fitness, the avoidance of substance misuse, and sexual health. However, the re-enforcement of these subjects during workplace reviews is insufficient. Learners make a positive contribution to the BRS community as well as the communities in which they are employed.

## **The quality of provision**

## **Grade 2**

12. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Training commences with an excellent nine week residential pre-employment training programme which is shortened for more experienced learners. This intensive course sets high expectations and is highly valued by learners and employers. Practical teaching is very good, with particular emphasis on the development of riding skills. Resources are excellent and qualified teachers have very good industry experience. Theory sessions do not always stimulate learners, particularly when these are held towards the end of the very long working day.
13. Tutors make good use of relevant information and learning technology including video analysis of horse riding and a BRS designed interactive learning package which assists in the revision of background knowledge.
14. The planning of on-the-job training is insufficient. Not enough credit is given for learners' prior learning and experience. A large majority of learners follow a similar programme regardless of their ability or experience. In too many cases, employers are insufficiently involved in designing a suitable work-place training plan. Where employers have their own training arrangements, BRS does not always use these to complement their own.
15. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory. Assessments takes place regularly and are adjusted when requested by learners. Apprenticeship learners have little ownership of this process. Over 18 months, advanced apprenticeship learners complete their portfolios with a suitable range of assessment methods. A large majority of level 3 learners attend practical training and assessments at BRS. Involvement of employers is limited, particularly at level 2.
16. During the pre-employment course, learners' progress is reviewed weekly. When employment commences, this takes place within the first three weeks, a month after and then every eight weeks. Reviews are often rushed and mainly focus on assessment. Progress reviews do not provide learners with concise targets or a sufficiently clear plan which details what they need to do to complete their training plan within time. Employers' contributions to these reviews are insufficient, although their general comments are discussed with assessors.
17. The range of provision is excellent. BRS provide a wide range of industry specific courses, including apprentice programmes, higher education and full-



cost courses. The pre-employment residential course prepares apprentices extremely well for working safely in a very demanding industry. A useful programme of additional topics helps learners to focus on their welfare and team working.

18. BRS has very effective links with employers. This enables BRS to successfully find employment for all learners who complete the pre-employment course. Most learners are employed by well known racing horse trainers. They work in high quality yards. Opportunities for on-the-job training and long term employment are very good. BRS works effectively with local schools to provide courses for year 10 and 11 students.
19. Learners receive good support for their welfare on the pre-employment course and their transition into employment. BRS maintains good support for learners at work. BRS responds well to additional literacy and numeracy learning needs as and when these arise, and to help learners achieve their key skills. However arrangements to identify and meet individual learning needs including literacy, numeracy, language and dyslexia at the start of training are insufficiently effective.

## **Leadership and management**

## **Grade 2**

20. Leadership and management are good. Very strong leadership ensures that all staff share in the organisation's ambitions and objectives. Very committed staff bring a wealth of experience and hard work to raise expectations and set high standards for learners. A detailed development plan sets out the organisation's three year strategy. Managers make good use of well presented management reports to successfully monitor business performance. Meetings effectively ensure staff contribute to the development of the business.
21. The trustees provide good oversight of the business. They have a good range of relevant business and industry expertise. Trustees are well informed of the organisation's performance and provide appropriate direction and challenge to senior managers. Nominated trustees have a special interest in safeguarding and equality and diversity. They have received appropriate training. The proportion of women trustees is low.
22. BRS's approach to promoting the safeguarding of learners is satisfactory. The nominated officer and staff have received appropriate training in safeguarding. All relevant staff have completed an advanced CRB check, which is recorded in a single central record. BRS promotes safe working practices and welfare issues well and pays good attention to the welfare needs of learners on the pre-employment residential course. They take particular care to ensure learners are placed in suitable employment. Current arrangements do not provide BRS with adequate assurance of each employer's commitment to safeguarding learners, especially for those living away from home. Workplace risk assessments do not include sufficient attention to learners' welfare needs. Welfare issues are insufficiently checked at progress reviews.

23. The promotion of equality and diversity are good. BRS makes very good use of data to analyse and improve the engagement and performance of different groups of learners. The organisation's recruitment strategy places significant emphasis on engaging non-traditional learners, including those from inner city riding schools and who cannot ride. The pre-employment course enables learners with little or no previous experience of working with horses to gain employment. Staff receive regular updates and training in equality and diversity. Recently introduced arrangements encourage assessors to promote and reinforce equality and diversity during progress reviews. However these arrangements are not yet sufficiently effective.
24. BRS's engagement with users is good. Managers and staff use well a mix of forums, questionnaires and meetings with learners and learner representatives to identify and address the concerns of learners. During workplace visits assessors respond promptly to learners' and employers' needs. BRS hold regular formal and informal meetings with employers to gain their views. Managers' involvement with employer organisations ensures employers' views contribute to improvements in the quality of the provision.
25. BRS's arrangements to evaluate performance and tackle weaknesses are good. Managers have a good understanding of where they need to improve performance and effectively use a range of strategies to identify causes and develop action plans to improve. A retention working group is increasing retention rates. BRS has appointed a senior roving assessor to improve assessment practice and a tutor to support learners' transition from the pre-employment course into employment. Quality assurance arrangements to monitor and evaluate performance have been updated and consolidated in a recently introduced quality cycle. It is too early to fully assess its effectiveness. A new lesson observation scheme includes all tutors. Managers have taken appropriate steps to support tutors to improve their teaching and learning. BRS's actions to evaluate the effectiveness and rigour of key quality assurance systems are insufficient.
26. BRS provides very good value for money. Apprentices are very well prepared for employment. The training facilities are excellent. Learners work in good and often excellent work placements. Overall, outcomes for learners are good, but success rates are satisfactory. Financial management is strong. BRS's commitment to sustainability is good.

## **Information about the inspection**

27. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's operations director, 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 Learning and Skills Council (LSC), 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 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)

## British Racing School

**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 <b>using the 4 point scale</b> 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive
<b>Approximate number of enrolled learners</b>		
Full-time learners	236	218
Part-time learners	0	0
<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	2	
<b>Outcomes for learners</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3	
How well do learners progress?	2	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	1	
How safe do learners feel?	2	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	1	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	2	
<b>Quality of provision</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	1	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	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?	2	
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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