DART Ltd

Inspection report

Unique reference number:	51468
Name of lead inspector:	Simon Cutting HMI
Last day of inspection:	04 March 2011
Type of provider:	Independent learning provider
Address:	Manor Farm House London Road Shardlow Derbyshire DE72 2GR
Telephone number:	01332 794910

Information about the provider

1. DART Ltd (DART) was established in 1999. The company provides work-based learning primarily for the land-based sector. DART offers training for apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in agriculture, horticulture, animal care & veterinary nursing. Work-based Diplomas have replaced National vocational qualifications (NVQ). The Skills Funding Agency funds these programmes. DART subcontracts the provision of off-the-job training and internal verification for veterinary nursing programmes to Bottle Green Training. This company has been providing specialised training for veterinary nurses since 1999.

2. DART holds a contract with The Derbyshire Network (TDN) to provide training for learners on Train to Gain programmes in horticulture, fencing and animal care. This was recently inspected and graded as part of TDN's provision and is not included in this inspection. DART also offers foundation learning at level 1 to a small group of learners each year. This was not inspected. Year 10 and 11 pupils from local schools attend DART to complete vocational programmes at levels 1 and 2 in land-based subjects. Around 90% of DART's business is government funded training.

3. DART employs over 40 staff. They work from its' head office in Shardlow, Derbyshire. A director and an operations manager lead the company. DART manages the provision in teams. Most learners have placements in Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire. They attend off-the-job training at various locations in the area. About 1% of learners have a minority ethnic heritage.

4. The provider provides training on behalf of the following providers:
   - The Derbyshire Network

5. The following organisation provides training on behalf of the provider:
   - Bottle Green training

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Provision for young learners: 14 to16 Foundation learning, including Entry to Employment	61 part-time learners 24 part-time learners
Employer provision: Train to Gain Apprenticeships	130 learners 342 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	2
Equality and diversity	2

Subject Area	Grade
Agriculture, horticulture and animal care	2

Overall effectiveness

6.   The overall effectiveness of DART's provision is good. The proportion of learners completing their apprenticeship is very good and progression into employment is excellent. Learners develop excellent practical skills and staff prepare them well for work across the land-based industries. Learners' understanding of health and safety is good. On-the-job training is very effective. Off-the-job training in veterinary nursing is very good. Staff are highly competent and have up-to-date knowledge. A minority of employers are insufficiently involved with key aspects of learning. Progress reviews are thorough. A few are poor with vague targets. In a minority of reviews, staff spend insufficient time checking learners' understanding. A few learners are unclear about technical terms.The company meets the needs of learners from rural areas particularly well. Learners have very good access to relevant additional qualifications, trips and visits. Particularly effective and productive partnerships provide learners with very good work and learning opportunities. Well trained staff provide excellent pastoral support. Learners with additional learning support needs make very good progress.

7.   Senior staff manage the provision of learning well. Communications are good. Managers use data well to effectively support business performance. DART is a supportive employer. It places a strong emphasis and priority to ensure learners' safeguarding and protection. Staff are not always sufficiently careful to

check that learners feel safe in their work. DART is taking effective actions to narrow gaps in achievement. The company provides particularly good support to widen access to their learning programmes. Managers use the analysis of an extensive range of feedback from learners and employers very well to promote improvements. Processes for monitoring and evaluating performance and tackling weaknesses are good. The self-assessment report is evaluative and rigorous but does not contain sufficient assessment of different subject areas and teaching and learning.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are good. The proportion of learners who complete their apprenticeship is very good. A minority of learners do not achieve as well as they should. Progression into employment is excellent.

- Learners develop excellent practical skills and staff prepare them well for work across the land-based industries. Learners have a good understanding of health and safety and take responsibility for their own health and well-being.

- The quality of provision is good. On-the-job learning is very effective. Off-the-job training in veterinary nursing is very good. Assessment and internal verification are strong. Staff are highly competent and have up-to-date knowledge. Most employers give learners many opportunities to develop new skills for assessment. A minority of employers are insufficiently involved with key aspects of learning.

- Progress reviews are thorough. Whilst most are of a good standard, a few are poor with vague targets. In a minority of reviews, staff spend insufficient time checking learners' understanding of wider themes. A few learners are unclear what various technical terms mean.

- The provision is outstanding in meeting the needs and interests of users. DART meets the needs of learners from rural areas particularly well. A wide range of activities and approaches keeps all learners interested and challenged. Learners have very good access to trips and visits relevant to their learning. Opportunities to take additional qualifications improve learners' career potential.

- Very good and productive partnerships provide learners with good work and learning opportunities. Courses for school pupils and disaffected young people effectively promote apprenticeships. Their progression to further relevant learning programmes is excellent.

- Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Well-trained staff have a very good understanding of individual learner's personal barriers to learning and provide excellent pastoral support. Learners with additional learning support needs have very effective support plans to enable them to progress well and develop their autonomy in learning.

- Senior staff manage the provision of learning well. They have high expectations. Managers use data well to support the company effectively. Communications are good. Staff know their roles and responsibilities well and contribute to business development and improvements effectively. DART is a supportive employer. Staff performance management is good.

- ■ The emphasis and priority for ensuring the safeguarding and protection of learners at DART are strong. DART works well with other agencies and their subcontractor to safeguard learners. Staff effectively use regular and topical updates to promote health, safety and welfare. Staff are not always sufficiently careful to check that learners feel safe in their work.

- ■ Promotion of equality and diversity is good. Managers use data well to analyse performance and support effective actions to narrow gaps in achievement. Learners regularly discuss equality and diversity. DART provides particularly good support to widen access to its learning programmes. The company has worked hard with schools and Connexions to promote career opportunities for all.

- ■ DART's engagement with users to support and promote improvements is excellent. It uses the analysis of an extensive range of learners and employers' feedback very well. Staff encourage learners to provide regular feedback and DART responds particularly well to their individual views, many of which stretch well beyond the requirements of their learning programme.

- ■ DART has good processes for monitoring and evaluating performance and tackling weaknesses. The use of the quality improvement plan is very effective. Staff are involved effectively in self-assessment. The self-assessment report is evaluative and rigorous but provides insufficient assessment of the performance of the different subject areas and the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

What does DART need to do to improve further?

- ■ Improve the success rates and progress for learners, in those subjects below the national rate, by providing additional individual learning support.

- ■ Encourage a minority of employers to be more involved with the key aspects of learning through greater participation in monitoring learners' progress and contributing to assessment evidence.

- ■ Ensure all reviews place sufficient emphasis on checking learners' understanding of wider themes, and have high quality written targets, which ensure that learners and their employers know what they need to do to achieve.

- ■ Improve the quality of self assessment by a more thorough evaluation of the each subject area and analysis of the standards of teaching and learning.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- ■ easy access to the helpful assessors who will fit visits around work activities

- ■ very professional and inspirational staff, who know much and will go the extra mile to help

- ■ encouragement to learn new skills and get qualified, and the help to improve reading, writing and maths

- opportunities to take additional qualifications and additional information to support wider learning
- really enjoyable learning which has a good mix of practical and theory
- improvement in self-confidence and belief to talk to people about work
- good information about next steps in employment
- the outdoor life and fresh air.

What learners would like to see improved:
- a reduction in the amount of paperwork
- more help to break learning down into smaller tasks that are easier to understand
- more opportunities for training in the workplace
- better guidance about what to bring for assessments.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors
What employers like:
- opportunities the training gives to learners who did not do well at school
- the skills learners develop which make them very well equipped for employment
- the very professional, approachable and knowledgeable staff who provide very good support and are sensitive to employers' needs and commitments
- opportunities to take additional qualifications
- excellent communications with DART
- the help learners receive to develop good attitudes to work.

What employers would like to see improved:
- more help with less motivated learners
- more involvement in the training of the learner.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement   Grade 2

8.   Senior staff lead DART well and provide good organisation. The established self assessment process is evaluative and rigorous. The quality improvement plan is detailed and effective. Staff's involvement in improving business performance and learners' outcomes is good. DART has made good progress since the last inspection. The grade for leadership and management and the contributory grades for quality assurance and equality of opportunity have improved. DART has maintained the strengths and resolved weaknesses. The company involves its partners effectively in self assessment and makes particularly effective use of stakeholders' feedback.

Outcomes for learners   Grade 2

9.   Outcomes for learners are good. They enjoy their time with DART. Overall success rates have steadily increased, although these dipped in 2008/09. In 2009/10, rates were well above national averages. Veterinary Nurses success rates were high. Women's success rates were higher than for men. Success rates for advanced apprentices aged 16 to18 success rates were below the national rates. Learners with additional learning needs have a higher success rate than those without. In 2009/10, around two thirds of learners achieved within the planned timescales. A minority of learners did not make progress as well as they should. The majority of learners who have completed the Entry to Employment programme progressed to an apprenticeship with DART.

10.   Learners' progression into futher education, training or employment is excellent. Most progress into full-time employment. Learners develop excellent practical skills. They find employment in a wide range of workplaces including golf courses, parks departments, veterinary practices, farms, and landscape businesses. Many have high levels of responsibility such as helping school children to plant trees and dealing with the public. Most learners achieve industrially relevant additional qualifications which they and their employers value.

11.   Learners have a good awareness of hazards and risks, and demonstrate a positive attitude to safety. They feel safe whilst at work and acknowledge that DART staff are easily accessible in the event of a problem. Most assessments and progress reviews place an appropriate emphasis on health, safety and well-being. Learners have a good awareness of health topics which staff promote well.

The quality of provision   Grade 2

12.   The quality of provision is good. On-the-job learning is very good. Learners benefit from highly supportive employers and from frequent well structured visits which fit well around work. The majority of employers work closely with assessors to give learners ample opportunity to develop new skills in preparation for assessment. Assessment and internal verification practice is strong. Off-the-job training in veterinary nursing is very good. A wide range of activities and approaches keeps all learners interested. Across all areas, staff are highly competent and have current industry experience. Their knowledge is respected both by learners and employers.

13.   Assessors are keen to maintain learners' interest and motivation and use assessment well to support their progress. Portfolios are of a high standard and not confusing through the inclusion of unnecessary information. Evidence includes written work, direct observations, photographic evidence, job sheets and testimonies. Most learners are fully engaged in assessment but a few do not take sufficient responsibility for compiling their own portfolio. A minority of employers' involvement in monitoring progress and contributing to assessment evidence is insufficient.

14.   The monthly reviews of learners' progress are thorough. Whilst most reviews are of a good standard and learners understand the actions they need to do to improve, a minority are of a poor written quality with vague targets. A few learners are unclear as to what various terms mean. In a minority of cases, questions and recording around equality and diversity, and safeguarding could be more comprehensive to allow a deeper level of understanding.

15.   The provision is outstanding in meeting the needs and interests of users. DART specialises in land-based industries at levels 1 to 3. This provision meets the needs of learners in rural communities and veterinary nurses particularly well. DART encourages learners to complete additional qualifications which improve their career potential well. Staff use trips and visits very well to enrich learning and raise learners' ambitions. For example, green keepers visit trade shows and specialist equipment manufacturers and animal care learners undertake dog obedience training courses and take part in dog shows.

16.   Strong and productive partnerships meet the needs and interests of learners and employers well. Liaison with employers is highly effective in obtaining the best possible opportunities for learners. Courses for school pupils and disaffected young people effectively promote the apprenticeship programmes and progression to further learning programmes is excellent.

17.   Care, guidance and support are excellent. Well trained staff have a very good understanding of individual learner's personal barriers to learning. They keep a very close watch on those at risk of leaving and make time to employ a wide range of effective interventions to prevent under performance. Learners appreciate this support and comment upon how much it helps them to progress. Additional support arrangements are particularly effective. Staff use

learners' support plans very well to set learning objectives and support learners progress and develop their autonomy in learning. Staff support learners well in choosing the correct units to meet their work role and career interests. Support is wide ranging and includes welfare visits, assistive technology, and help with travel to enable learners to achieve additional qualifications.

Leadership and management   Grade 2

18. Senior staff manage DART's provision of learning well and provide good organisation. They have high expectations. Good communications support business operations well. DART manages the performance of its staff well. They know their roles and responsibilities well and are clear about how they contribute to business development and improvements. DART's approach to business planning is effective and it makes good use of management information to monitor and evaluate business performance. DART is a supportive employer. Staff value the family friendly policies and work arrangements and access to staff development which helps improves their performance.

19. DART places a strong emphasis and priority on safeguarding learners. Staff are well trained, appropriate policies and procedures are in place. All staff have a Criminal Record Bureau check and their details are on a central register. DART works well with other agencies and their subcontractor to ensure the safety and welfare of learners. Staff receive regular and topical updates which they use well when visiting learners and employers to promote health, safety and welfare. DART takes prompt action to resolve safeguarding issues impacting on learners in the workplace. When visiting a minority of learners in the workplace, staff are not always sufficiently careful to check that learners feel safe in their work.

20. The promotion of equality and diversity is very good. DART provides particularly good support arrangements to widen access to learning. Staff work flexibility to be more accessible for learners. They support learners well with their travel and off-the-job training arrangements and DART works particularly well to resolve wider barriers to learning and personal welfare issues. The company regularly promotes equality and diversity with learners and employers using themes significant to them and relavant information leaflets. Well-trained staff make good use of links with other organisations to support and promote DART's work. The company makes appropriate use of an equality and diversity action plan. DART uses data well to analyse the performance of different groups of learners and is taking effective action to narrow gaps in achievement. It works hard with schools and Connexions to attract new learners into traditionally gender specific careers.

21. DART's makes extensive use of stakeholder feedback to support and promote improvements. It completes a very thorough programme of learners and employers' surveys throughout each learner's training. The company uses the analysis of these surveys effectively to respond to issues. DART encourages

learners' representatives to make further contributions. DART supports learners to provide regular feedback and it responds very well to their individual views, many of which stretch well beyond the requirements of their learning programme.

22. DART has good processes for monitoring and evaluating performance and tackling weaknesses. It makes good use of a much improved quality improvement plan to maintain strengths and to improve standards. DART's quality improvement group provides effective oversight of the plan. Staff roles and responsibilities for this plan link effectively to their performance management. A clear cycle of effective activities underpins key business processes. All staff are successfully engaged in self assessment, as are DART's partners. The self-assessment report is thorough and accurate. However, self assessment does not include a sufficient evaluation of each subject area and teaching and learning.

23. DART provides good value for money. Success rates are well above national averages. Learners considerably improve their employability. The quality of teaching and learning is good and guidance and support is excellent. DART manages staff well. Experienced and knowledgeable staff support learners well. The company places a strong emphasis on the quality of the learning and support for employers. DART's approach to sustainability is good.

Information about the inspection

24. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's operations manager, 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 funding bodies, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.

25. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed for the provider. They 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)

DART

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. **Social and personal development:** all adult safeguarded provision

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	0	0
Part-time learners	342	342
Overall effectiveness	**2**	**2**
Capacity to improve	2	
Outcomes for learners	**2**	**2**
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2	
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	
*Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?**	2	
*How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?**	n/a	
Quality of provision	**2**	**2**
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?	1	
Leadership and management	**2**	**2**
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?	2	
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?	1	
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