

Heathercroft Training Services Ltd

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		24-28 September 2012
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good-Grade 2
	Previous inspection:	Inadequate-Grade 4
Outcomes for learners		Good-Grade 2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good-Grade 2
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Good-Grade 2

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is good because:

- A high proportion of apprentices complete their programmes within the expected time in childcare, health and social care and horse care.
- Apprentices in all subject areas develop very strong employability skills and vocational competencies.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment in all areas is good or better. Assessments are well planned, strongly linked to vocational practice and provide learners with constructive and forward-looking feedback.
- Apprentices receive high-quality support from assessors which allows them to make good or better progress.
- Leaders and managers have taken concerted and effective action to improve the quality of provision since the previous inspection.

This is not yet an outstanding provider because:

- Not all learners take part in clear and comprehensive discussions to agree and record meaningful and effective targets in their individual learning plans.
- The more able learners are insufficiently stretched and challenged to make rapid progress through independent learning.
- The arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning do not yet ensure all assessors consider learning in addition to simply assessing unit and programme completion.

Published date	31 October 2012
Inspection Number	385483
URN:	52165

- Learners' understanding of equality and diversity do not yet routinely move beyond the demands of units and programmes.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all assessors engage learners in more meaningful and comprehensive discussions to agree and fully record meaningful and effective targets in their individual learning plans. Provide training for assessors to ensure that they are confident in setting targets for apprentices that directly reflect their learning needs.
- Stretch and challenge the more able learners so that they make more rapid progress through independent learning.
- Develop learners' skills in English and mathematics more uniformly across provision, by ensuring that all assessors focus on these skills and carefully correct spelling and grammatical errors in learners' work.
- Improve arrangements for the observation of teaching and learning, and refine the instruments for planning teaching, learning and assessment so that all assessors consider apprentices' learning rather than simply assessing for unit and programme completion.
- Ensure that assessors and trainers develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity by moving beyond the basic material required for completion of units and programmes.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Good
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Learners' outcomes are outstanding in early years provision, with success rates well above the national figures. Outcomes are good in health and social care, equine studies and management, with success rates above national averages for such provision, whilst in information and communication technology (ICT), success rates are just above national averages and require improvement. In all subject areas, success rates have improved significantly since the previous inspection. ■ Learners from all identifiable groups achieve at broadly the same rate and make comparable progress from their starting points. In areas such as equine studies, where many learners have no previous experience of the subject, progress is impressive. ■ Assessors work very effectively to help learners develop skills and confidence in their job roles. Employers appreciate the considerable gains that many learners make in communication skills, customer and client care, independent working and team working. Many learners are able to take on more responsible tasks and roles as a result of training. ■ Progression between levels in the subject areas is good overall, with considerable numbers of learners moving from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships. Increasing numbers of learners in management are progressing to higher apprenticeships, which results in considerably improved career opportunities. Good progression also exists from 14 to 16 school-based provision into post-16 courses. ■ Learners are well motivated across all subject areas, enjoying their training and contributing fully to teaching, learning and assessment activities. Attendance and punctuality are good in all off-the-job training sessions organised in school-based provision. Apprentices are punctual and diligent in their work. ■ Standards of learners' theory and practical work are good. Portfolios are generally well maintained, with a good range of evidence sources and adequate reflection on progress and learning. Employers note clear improvements in apprentices' working practices and demeanour during training. 	

- Some learners' English and mathematical skills are not sufficiently well developed. In a small number of cases apprentices have insufficient guidance from assessors on how to correct errors in written work and improve their written English.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good overall and contribute to steadily improving outcomes for learners. Assessment is particularly impressive; assessors visit learners frequently and additional telephone or electronic contact between visits maintains their motivation. Assessors plan particularly well for learners to maximise the use of opportunities from work in their assessments and they use their occupational experience effectively to relate theory to workplace activities.
- Learners in childcare, equine studies and management receive particularly good training and coaching. Assessors carefully plan training sessions and they use questioning well to encourage learners to find solutions. All learners receive good on-the-job training from their employers.
- Learners in health and social care are well motivated to learn independently. However, training sessions are not always carefully planned and there is an over reliance on using the internet to develop knowledge which does not always challenge and extend learning, particularly for those learners working at higher levels.
- The development of learners' skills and knowledge is good. Most learners develop good employability skills and attributes, including self-confidence and improved communication skills; their performance at work has improved as a result of the training, although a small number of highly able learners lack appropriate independent learning skills. In childcare, learners are confident and articulate and talk knowledgeably about their learning and how to apply it to the workplace.
- Support for learners is good and enables them to make good progress. Learners value the support they receive from their assessors. Assessment is suitably adapted to meet the requirements of learners with additional needs. Learners are given constructive and detailed feedback to improve their work and their professional practice and client service.
- Training opportunities to develop skills in English and mathematics are not sufficiently developed, and not all assessors develop apprentices' skills sufficiently well. In some cases, spelling and grammatical errors in learners' work are not corrected. Childcare learners receive better support where English and mathematics are firmly established and contextualised within the main qualifications.
- Initial advice and guidance is comprehensive and clear, and initial assessments are used well to establish learners' starting points and needs, but this information is not always used effectively to plan learning and monitor progress. Learners are not sufficiently involved in developing their individual learning plans and a very small number of learners are not clear about the progress they are making and what they still need to do to achieve their learning goals.
- Learners are not always set sufficiently meaningful targets in their individual learning plans or during progress reviews. Their targets are often too general and insufficiently challenging. There is too much emphasis on setting targets to complete units and qualifications and insufficient focus is given to increasing wider knowledge and developing skills.
- Staff promote equality and diversity well at induction; however, this is not always followed up afterwards in reviews and assessments. In childcare, the promotion of equality and diversity is well established within the courses, but in other areas the approach does not develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the wider cultural and social aspects beyond legislation.

- Heathercroft Training Services Ltd (HTS) has established very good relationships with employers to support learners effectively in the workplace. Employers receive frequent and informative feedback on learners' progress, are fully supportive of the training and are actively involved in selecting units to meet workplace requirements. In childcare, mentors provide effective support for learners.
- The revised process for observing teaching and learning is thoughtfully structured with a strong focus on assessment practice, but insufficient attention is given to developing teaching and training skills amongst assessors. Planning of teaching and learning is often too sharply focused on the achievement of units for apprentices' qualifications, instead of developing independent learning and study skills, critical thinking or other wider skills.
- Effective support is provided for assessors to achieve teaching and assessment qualifications. All established assessors now have appropriate qualifications. However, progress in preparing assessors to deliver functional skills has been too slow and not all assessors can yet provide effective support for learners.

Early years and playwork

Apprenticeships

Good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good at HTS, supporting the currently outstanding outcomes for learners. In order for the quality of teaching and learning to match the outcomes, teachers need to provide more challenge for the highly motivated, more able learners.
- Lessons are well structured and delivered. Teachers plan the use of resource material very well and share background reading materials with learners, some of which enable independent learning to take place. Professional discussions demonstrate that learners have a good understanding of early years topics.
- Apprentices are employed in day nurseries and pre-school provision where assessors work well with employers to ensure that learners acquire good employment skills. Apprentices have good training and assessment opportunities in their workplaces, and assessors visit work settings frequently to support and plan assessments with learners. Assessment practice is effective and thoughtfully adapted to meet the needs of individual learners.
- Teachers and assessors have good vocational experience and relevant professional qualifications. They willingly share their knowledge and experience with learners. Lessons, particularly the professional discussions, are enjoyed by articulate, confident learners who demonstrate very effectively that they are able to apply their knowledge to their practice.
- The standard of learners' work is good. Learners make good progress and demonstrate good understanding of child development. They receive helpful feedback on their work and good advice and guidance about how to improve, including thorough feedback about the improvement of spelling and grammar on written work.
- Employability skills are very well developed. Staff in workplaces provide good role models and learners are given appropriate responsibility. One learner planned and implemented a very effective activity to promote creative development for several children while at the same time supporting their social and language development.
- HTS staff use the internal tracking system effectively to monitor learners' progress, and progress review meetings take place frequently. Learners make good progress with their qualifications and in becoming independent, autonomous learners. They undertake self-directed study activities outside their workplace in a willing and enthusiastic manner.
- Learners' understanding of equality and diversity is good. For example, one learner showed

good understanding of the ways children with disabilities could be supported to take part in all nursery activities. Other examples of their good understanding of diversity are seen in learners' written work and clearly demonstrated in their professional practice when dealing with children.

- Partnerships with employers are strong, and teachers and assessors make frequent visits to them. Very effective communication strategies are in place which enable any concerns about learners' progress to be dealt with promptly and the appropriate support put in place. Mentors are appointed in the workplace to offer additional guidance and to strengthen further the links with employers.
- Learners attending two local primary schools are supported well to achieve their qualifications. Documentation is completed appropriately and provides a clear record of learners' progress. Frequent feedback is given to learners, but in a small number of cases there are too few comments giving clear guidance as to what learners can do to improve their learning.
- Individual learning plans are completed with adequate information about learners' progress. However, learners do not play a full part in their completion and they are not encouraged sufficiently to take responsibility for their own learning. There is poor use of detailed target setting, so that targets are more focused on completion of their qualification than improving their understanding.

Health and social care Apprenticeships

Good

- Learners receive good on-the-job training, coaching and assessment which leads to a high proportion of apprentices achieving their qualifications within the expected time. Assessment is well planned and apprentices are guided carefully through care practice principles during which time they learn how to implement these principles well. On-the-job individual training and assessment are coordinated thoroughly and used to good effect.
- Motivated and autonomous learners make good progress, develop a good range of personal, social and employability skills, and enjoy their programmes. Apprentices quickly acquire the required knowledge including equality and diversity; they maintain clients' dignity and produce a good standard of written work in well-presented portfolios. Employers can see the benefit of training their employees and the progress they are making in their practice skills and their understanding of clients' needs.
- Assessors have good specialist expertise and plan well with employers to provide very effective learning at work. New assessors are supported well to develop suitable training skills and knowledge, and the case loads of assessors are matched well to individual learners' needs. Staff assess learners frequently so that they know how well they have done, although some verbal and written feedback does not inform learners clearly how they can improve. Nevertheless, steps to make progress towards unit completion are carefully planned.
- During observations, practice activities and one-to-one tuition improve learners' practical skills so that the learners become more confident in recognising and meeting the needs of their clients. They develop good communication skills which they use to good effect to reflect on their practice during observation feedback and professional discussions. Effective assessment activities help learners to improve their communication with clients and to understand why they need to complete reports and records.
- Learners receive good initial guidance about their programme which prepares them for learning and assessment; experienced assessors make good use of opportunities throughout the programme to inform learners about future career pathways and training. Exit reviews

for progressing learners do not always make best use of possible transition opportunities and activities. Progression from intermediate to advanced apprenticeships doubled during 2011/12 and there is good progression from advanced apprenticeships to management pathways within the workplace.

- Support for learning is good. Experienced staff have developed a very effective range of support strategies to support learners who are not making sufficient progress, building support around individual learners' needs and ability levels. Learners can gain access to additional support at any point in the programme. Assessors can activate additional resources quickly. Learners with identified additional learning support needs have good resources.
- Most learners are confident to discuss equality and diversity competently in relation to their practice. Equality and diversity awareness is raised through discussion at each progress review and made vocationally relevant to learners' qualifications. Learners become more confident in dealing with any equality issues at work and their understanding of diversity in relation to their job role is also enhanced.
- Assessors use initial assessment well to identify learners' starting points and to plan additional learning support and develop learners' key skills. However, planning for functional skills is in its early stages. Learners develop their key skills adequately, although some assessors do not routinely correct spelling and grammatical errors, and some staff are not sufficiently prepared to support learners effectively to improve their numeracy skills.
- Individual learning plans are not used effectively in all cases, and a small number of plans lack clear targets for learning and improvement. In these cases, learners are unclear what progress they are making over their whole programme, and they are not able to work independently between progress reviews.

ICT for practitioners

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- Assessors are very supportive and motivate learners well; they plan learners' programmes carefully to meet the needs of the learner and employer. Learners describe assessors as friendly, helpful and supportive, and appreciate the ability to contact their assessors easily either by phone or by email. Employers too support their employees well to achieve the qualification and develop new skills.
- Learners who are in the provision which is subcontracted to a local school also receive good support from their assessors. This programme is run over two years, compared with one year in the rest of the provision, targeting learners who would be at risk of not completing a college course. Assessors consider the learners' needs carefully and plan their programmes accordingly so that a significant number of these learners progress to permanent employment or higher education as a result.
- Training is effective, maintaining the improvements seen at the monitoring visit resulting in the recent improvements in the success rates to a little above the national average. Learners gain knowledge and skills from working alongside a more experienced employee or, for those who are more experienced in their job, from others in the organisation. Assessors give effective individual coaching when needed.
- Learners also gain a good range of employability skills, such as report writing skills, and there is evidence of improved confidence and self-esteem. Employers speak about how the development of these skills has had a significantly positive impact on their learners.
- Learners in provision based in local schools have effective separate off-the-job training for their technical certificate. Other learners, who are generally more experienced, are directed

to various sources of information to research topics for themselves, but with effective individualised support if required. These learners enjoy this approach and make good progress as independent learners.

- Assessment is good. Assessors plan assessments well to fit in with learners' work and employers' priorities. Assessors give effective feedback which highlights the positive aspects of the assessment but also lets the learners know how they can improve. For example, the feedback following one written assignment commented on how a learner had demonstrated all the competences required, and how the work could be developed to reach the next level.
- All assessors, both those at HTS and those with the subcontractor, are now well qualified, having an appropriate teaching qualification as well as a vocational qualification and relevant commercial experience. The assessors apply their professional and teaching knowledge well to ensure learners make good progress.
- HTS has introduced an electronic portfolio since the previous inspection and most learners find this very useful and easy to use. The small number of paper-based portfolios are well structured with a good range of evidence. However, for ICT learners, there is insufficient imaginative use of electronic evidence, for example electronic portfolios contain detailed evidence but very few learners include photographic or audio evidence.
- Assessors carry out progress reviews at appropriate intervals and these are well planned and learners understand exactly how much of the programme they have completed. Targets for the next meeting are set, although these are too closely related to unit completion rather than the learning taking place. Equality and diversity are covered in parts of the programme, but this has too much emphasis on legislation rather than the issues which prompted the legislation to be introduced.
- Initial assessment effectively identifies those learners requiring additional support. Most learners have GCSE mathematics and English at grade A* to C and few need English and mathematics support. HTS supports these learners effectively through individualised coaching at the training centre.
- HTS gives its learners appropriate information, advice and guidance about their options at the end of their programme. Much of this, however, is given informally and learners have no formal record of these discussions.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and managers have worked very successfully to raise standards and improve learners' outcomes since the previous inspection. In all subject areas, an ambitious strategy of improvement in teaching, learning and assessment, and in progress monitoring, has resulted in staff having a clear and unrelenting focus on learners' outcomes and progress. Apprenticeship success rates as a result are above national rates, and are in most cases considerably higher.
- Performance management at HTS has been very productive and has contributed significantly to improvements in standards and outcomes. Staff have been given the opportunity to contribute in roles and in ways which best suit their abilities and areas of expertise. Where there were areas of under performance at the previous inspection, managers took decisive action for the benefit of learners and employers.
- The curriculum is well managed across the organisation, and team leaders and assessors understand their roles and responsibilities well. At all levels, staff share a clear goal to improve learners' opportunities and employability. Assessors and other curriculum staff have a good understanding of their learners' individual and group progress.
- Self-assessment activity and reporting function well to identify strengths, highlight areas for improvement and to explore the experiences of learners. Self-assessment is well connected to quality improvement planning and managers are diligent in their monitoring of

performance across the provision. Meetings of managers and staff are recorded well and are clear in their focus on learners' success rates and progress.

- Since the previous inspection, managers and staff have focused relentlessly on the goal of improving success rates and other outcomes for learners. In doing so, the importance of learning has at times been subordinated to a concentration on the completion of elements and units of the programmes.
- HTS gathers and reviews users' views frequently and productively. At each progress review meeting, information recorded from learners' conversations with assessors is thoroughly analysed by managers. Learners have benefited from changes to course structures, improved liaison with employers, and flexible assessment patterns as a result of expressing their views.
- Provision meets the needs and interests of learners, employers and the wider community very successfully. HTS maintains very strong links with schools, nurseries and care homes to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment are relevant and productive in meeting employers' and learners' needs. Partners and employers receive good levels of feedback on learners' progress, and are able to contribute fully to self-assessment and review processes.
- Equality and diversity are adequately promoted in the curriculum, and staff are confident in discussing equalities matters with learners. Staff have taken part in an appropriate level of training in recent years, and company marketing, induction and promotional material give suitable prominence to those under represented in training and education. HTS has suitable policies and procedures in place to tackle bullying and discrimination and to ensure the narrowing of achievement gaps. The company meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding learners.

Record of Main Findings (RMF 2012)

Provider name: Heathercroft Training Services Ltd.

Learning type:

Apprenticeships

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	Apprenticeships
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Outcomes for learners	2	2
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	2	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management	2	2

Subject areas graded for quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Early years and playwork	2
Health and social care	2
ICT for practitioners	3

Provider details

Provider name	
Inspection dates	24-28 September 2012
Lead inspector	Richard Beynon HMI
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	14+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year 2011/12	158
Principal/CEO	Ms Yvonne Schofield
Date of previous inspection	24 June 2011
Website address	http://hts.ac.uk/

Provider information at the time of the inspection				
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Total number of full-time learners excluding apprenticeships	N/A	2	3	N/A
Apprenticeship level	Intermediate	Advanced	Higher	
Number of apprentices	121	155	12	
Age of full-time learners	14-16	16-18	19+	
Total by age	82	68	220	
Number of part-time learners	N/A			
Number of main sites	One			
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)			
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following subcontractor:	<div><div></div>Bishop Bell School</div>			

Additional socio-economic information

HTS offers programmes across Kent, East Sussex, West Sussex and South London, in areas with low and high unemployment. Kent, East Sussex and West Sussex have low proportions of the population from Black and minority ethnic heritage groups.

Information about this inspection

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four additional inspectors, assisted by the Business and Performance Manager 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 past three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails to gather the views of learners and employers. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. These views are reflected throughout the report. The inspection took into account all of the provision at the provider. Subject inspectors looked in detail at a sample of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in early years, health and social care, and ICT for practitioners.

What inspection judgements mean

Provider		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding provider is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its learners' needs. This ensures that learners are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good provider is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its learners' needs. Learners are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A provider that requires improvement is performing less well than it might be reasonably expected in one or more of the key areas. This provider will receive a full inspection 12-18 months after the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A provider that is inadequate is one where the provider is failing to give its learners an acceptable standard of education and/or training and the provider's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the provider. This provider will receive a re-inspection within 12-15 months after the date of this inspection.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012