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Mr Duncan Gregory
Operations Director
British Racing School
Snailwell Road
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Dear Mr Gregory

Short inspection of British Racing School

Following the short inspection on 16 and 17 December 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since the provider was judged to be good in August 2010.

This provider continues to be good.

You and your leadership team have maintained the good quality of education and training in the British Racing School since the previous inspection. You and your team continue to place a high emphasis on ensuring that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good or better. The arrangements for improving the quality of provision through effective observations of teaching, learning and assessment are good. Action planning to rectify identified weaknesses from observations is robust. Findings inform tutors' and instructors' appraisals and lead to relevant professional training and development. As a result, a high proportion of apprentices complete their programmes successfully and the vast majority of learners on study programmes and traineeships achieve their qualifications and progress to apprenticeships in the horse racing industry.

You, your senior leaders and trustees have a clear and ambitious strategy for the British Racing School to be fully responsive to the needs of the horse racing sector, including employers and key stakeholders such as the British Horseracing Authority and the National Trainers Federation. The excellent resources and facilities reflect the demands of working in the horse racing industry aptly.

Trustees have a broad range of expertise and knowledge. They take a very active role in ensuring learners and apprentices receive a high standard of support and challenge in their learning, during their residential stays on-site and in their employment in the horse racing industry.

You and your leadership team have ensured that much good progress has been made in rectifying the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Leaders ensure all learners take up pertinent programmes that are fully relevant to their needs and aspirations and that most make good progress. The traineeships programme is exemplary. Staff carry out assessment of learners' skills accurately and promptly at the start of their programmes and ensure that the findings inform the planning of their training. Leaders have strengthened the monitoring of learners' and apprentices' performance. Staff have high levels of relevant industry knowledge and expertise and use these well to ensure all learners develop very high standards of practical skills. Most learners and apprentices achieve good standards of written work. The large majority of theory teaching is good; however, a minority of tutors do not check learners' understanding and knowledge in lessons routinely, nor do they set sufficiently challenging targets for the minority of learners who require additional support with English and mathematics. A few employers still do not have sufficient involvement in the training, assessment and review of apprentices' progress.

Leaders collect data on the performance of different groups of learners and are able to articulate verbally the actions that have secured very good outcomes for learners and apprentices in the current year. Leaders and managers track the progress of learners well. However, leaders do not always provide enough evidence in their self-assessment of the provision, quality improvement plan or at quality improvement meetings to demonstrate they are fully aware of all areas that require further development and plan sufficient actions to rectify underperformance.

Safeguarding is effective.

All safeguarding arrangements are robust and well established. This includes the risk assessment of apprentices in the workplace through the use of welfare-related risk assessments and checks at their progress reviews. All staff are appropriately trained on safeguarding and fully aware of safeguarding arrangements. Three lead staff cascade training on a regular basis to their colleagues. Further training on the dangers of radicalisation and extremism is planned to take place shortly.

A trustee with lead responsibility for safeguarding and the safeguarding committee meet regularly to review arrangements for learners and apprentices and provide rigorous challenge to leaders and managers to ensure safeguarding processes and procedures are robust across all aspects of the provision.

Inspection findings

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. They enable a high proportion of apprentices and most learners on study programmes and traineeships provision to make good progress from their starting points, develop their knowledge and skills and achieve their qualifications. In particular, leaders' data for 2014/15 indicate that learners' success on the Principles of Horse Care course at level 2 and English and mathematics functional skills courses at all levels is high.

- Tutors and instructors challenge learners to excel from the outset of their programme; learners respond well and enjoy working to meet this challenge. The large majority of tutors use a broad range of activities to ensure that most learners understand and apply the concepts and principles of their theory work to underpin their practical skills development. However, a minority of tutors do not use questioning techniques and assessment tasks effectively to check learners' understanding and knowledge in lessons. As a result, a minority of learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- The assessment of learners' abilities and skills at the start of their programmes is thorough and informs the planning of learners' programmes accurately. Staff know their learners well and use this knowledge effectively to offer relevant support and challenge throughout learners' programmes. Tutors and instructors check learners' progress routinely through good use of an online portfolio. They work effectively with learners to ensure they stay on track to meet, or exceed, agreed targets.
- Instructors use assessment well. This enables apprentices to develop their research and evaluation skills and demonstrate how they meet expected competencies. Instructors set apprentices precise targets and provide helpful feedback that enables them to improve their work. Reviews are purposeful and challenge apprentices effectively to make good progress. However, instructors do not routinely promote equality and diversity effectively in reviews.
- Leaders have ensured that learners benefit from excellent resources, which include a large working racehorse yard, indoor horse training facilities and substantial horse racing grounds. These facilities enable learners to develop valuable work-related skills and a thorough understanding of the expectations of employers in the horse racing industry. Learners' knowledge, skills and aptitudes for the demands of the workplace are valued highly by employers.
- Tutors ensure the large majority of learners make good progress in developing their English and mathematics skills. In 2014/15, leaders' data indicate that far more learners achieved level 2 qualifications in English and mathematics than in previous years. Staff provide additional sessions for learners who require further support with English and/or mathematics and these enable the large majority of learners to extend their skills effectively. However, tutors do not set sufficiently challenging targets with a minority of learners who require additional support and, as a consequence, these learners do not make sufficient progress. Tutors do not use the virtual learning environment to promote English and mathematics sufficiently. However instructors promote the value of English and mathematics in the workplace and, as a result, the large majority of apprentices develop these essential skills further.
- Leaders and managers ensure that learners have substantial opportunities to develop their personal and social skills through a broad programme of enrichment that takes place as a part of their residential stay. In particular, good emphasis is placed on personal fitness, health and dietary issues pertinent to employment in the equine industry. Learners develop a good understanding of equality and diversity, aided by a series of film clips

produced by the provider that promote the value of the protected equality characteristics and equality legislation in the horse racing industry.

- Leaders are able to articulate the actions that have rectified underperformance verbally and have enabled most learners and apprentices to succeed. However, it is not always clear in their self-assessment that leaders are fully aware of all areas of underperformance. Leaders' quality improvement planning lacks sufficient specificity to demonstrate how actions will secure sustainable improvement. For example, leaders' most recent self-assessment report does not make reference to the marked decline in the overall success rates of apprentices on intermediate programmes in 2014/15, nor do leaders plan sufficient actions in the quality improvement plan and at quality improvement meetings to demonstrate how improvement will be secured. Leaders have not planned to reduce the gap in achievement between male apprentices and their female peers. Similarly, leaders do not collect and analyse information on the destinations of apprentices who do not complete their programmes successfully.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and trustees should ensure that:

- their self-assessment of the quality of provision is fully informed by the performance of all learners and apprentices. Leaders should plan and monitor precise actions to rectify any underperformance with clear lines of responsibility and accountability.
- they identify the reasons for the gap in achievement between male apprentices and their female peers and plan and monitor specific actions to reduce this.
- they collect and analyse information on the destinations of all apprentices to enable them to measure the value of the provision and further improve the provision in order to further reduce the proportion of those who drop out of apprenticeship training.
- the good practice that exists across the staff team is shared more widely to ensure all tutors plan assessment tasks and use questioning techniques effectively to check learners' understanding and knowledge in lessons.
- tutors set challenging targets with all learners who require additional support with their English and mathematics. Tutors should improve use of the virtual learning environment to promote English and mathematics.

I am copying this letter to the Skills Funding Agency and the Education Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Matt Vaughan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, the team was assisted by the Operations Director as nominee. We held meetings with you, the Chair of the Trustees, the Chief Executive, the trustee with lead responsibility for safeguarding, managers, tutors, workplace instructors and subcontractor staff. We observed teaching, learning and assessment and scrutinised learners' and apprentices' past and current work at your main campus, at the subcontractor's site and in the workplace. We spoke with learners, apprentices and employers. We reviewed a wide range of documentary evidence including that relating to self-assessment, performance and safeguarding. We considered the views of learners and employers by reviewing the comments received on Ofsted's online questionnaires and by seeking the views of learners, apprentices and employers during the on-site inspection activity.