

Northern Racing College

Independent Learning Provider

Inspection dates	21–24 June 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for learners	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Trustees, managers and staff have high expectations of learners and apprentices that motivate them to be successful in their learning and working life.
- Personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding. Learners develop very good employability and personal skills that make them particularly well equipped to progress successfully onto their next steps in the horseracing industry or beyond.
- Trustees and staff at all levels work well with the horseracing industry to support the provision of highly effective work experience and apprenticeship opportunities.
- Well-qualified and experienced teachers and trainers use their skills, knowledge and experience well to inspire learners to make rapid progress in the development of their practical skills.
- Learners and apprentices receive high-quality personal and pastoral support to help them overcome barriers to learning and complete their learning.
- Learners and apprentices receive good careers guidance and advice that help them to plan successfully their next steps in learning or employment.

It is not yet an outstanding provider

- Learners and apprentices have insufficient opportunities to develop their written English skills and the achievement of functional skills in English on the intensive study programme requires improvement.
- Learners on the intensive study programme, who need to improve their GCSE English and/or mathematics grade, receive insufficient support to sit the examination when they progress to an apprenticeship or a job.
- Teachers do not ensure that learners have a suitable record of their learning to support future learning and trainers do not ensure that apprentices have a written record of feedback on how to improve their work.
- Checks to evaluate improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment as a result of staff development and sharing of good practice are not thorough enough.

Full report

Information about the provider

- The Northern Racing College (NRC), formerly the South Yorkshire Training Trust, is a charitable organisation limited by guarantee and was established in 1984. It is one of two dedicated horseracing schools that is approved by the sport's governing body, the British Horseracing Authority. NRC's training centre, with a purpose-built residential unit that accommodates up to 42 learners, is at Rossington Hall between Bawtry and Doncaster.
- Most learners start on an intensive 18-week study programme that includes a 12-week residential course followed by six weeks of work experience in the horseracing industry before moving to employment. Most learners then start an intermediate and/or advanced apprenticeship in racehorse care. Currently, nine learners aged 16 to 19, 10 adults and five trainees attend the intensive study programme. NRC recruits learners nationally. Work placements are mostly in rural areas.
- About a third of learners start their learning having achieved a full level 2 qualification or above. This is significantly lower than the national average in 2015 of 69%. NRC provides a wide range of specialist courses for the racing industry.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by insisting that:
 - teachers and trainers ensure that learners and apprentices have sufficient opportunities to develop further their written English skills
 - teachers ensure that learners have a suitable record of their learning to reinforce and support future learning
 - trainers ensure that apprentices have a high-quality written record of feedback so that they are clear about the expected standards and know what they need to do to improve their work.
- Ensure that learners on the intensive study programme, who are learning GCSE English and/or mathematics, receive sufficient guidance and advice so that they can continue their studies beyond the end of the course.
- Implement checks to evaluate the impact of staff development and sharing of good practice on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Trustees, leaders and staff are highly committed to providing high-quality provision that prepares young people very successfully for a career in the horseracing industry. They have created a culture of high expectations where staff use their high levels of skills and knowledge to motivate learners and apprentices. This has resulted in learners on intensive study programmes and apprentices making rapid progress in developing the skills and knowledge they need to do well in their chosen career.
- The chief executive officer (CEO) and trustees use their knowledge and experience well to ensure that provision meets the demands of the horseracing industry very effectively. The intensive study programme meets the needs of learners and the industry particularly well. Staff at all levels within the organisation work very well with partners, such as national bodies and employers. This is particularly effective at supporting the provision of highly effective work experience placements and apprenticeship opportunities.
- The CEO and trustees have a very strong focus on future plans to ensure the long-term financial stability of the organisation and have recently ratified a business plan covering well-informed and considered options.
- Leaders and managers ensure effective day-to-day management of the provision. Staff communicate well with each other, ensuring that information about any concerns are effectively communicated. Teaching staff regularly attend meetings to track initiatives and the progress of learners and apprentices.
- Staff prepare learners and apprentices very well for life in modern Britain. For example, apprentices are working well in yards with colleagues from many backgrounds, which are often from a very different background to their own. Learners have a very good understanding of different aspects of modern Britain and how these relate to their life.
- All staff are involved in self-assessment, which accurately identifies key strengths and weaknesses. Staff have a clear view of what needs to be improved and how they are going to achieve these improvements. A number of issues identified in the 2014/15 self-assessment report, such as the quality of the less effective provision in English and mathematics, are already showing improvement. Systems are not always as effectively joined together as they could be to ensure that information is used to best effect and good practice is shared.
- Appraisal and performance management systems are effective in improving staff performance. Managers use staff personal and team targets well to support development, but organisational targets are not sufficiently personalised to fit with the job roles of individuals.
- In previous years, the provision of English and mathematics for learners has not been effective in supporting their successful achievement of qualifications. Senior managers have put in place changes this year, such as the employment of new staff, which have led to improvement in learner achievement. Increasing numbers of learners are gaining qualifications in mathematics and latterly in English. A very small number of learners are enrolled on GCSE mathematics and English qualifications. These learners complete their course well before the dates of the GCSE examinations; NRC does not arrange opportunities for learners to continue to study these qualifications and sit their examinations.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Many of the trustees have a detailed knowledge and understanding of the horseracing industry, which they use to good effect, supporting the development of NRC's strategic direction. Trustees also use their business backgrounds to scrutinise financial management and developments effectively. Trustees have a sound overview of the provision at NRC, and are aware of key strengths and weaknesses, but they do not have as deep a knowledge of educational issues as they do of strategic developments and financial matters. Trustees are aware of this and have plans to broaden their knowledge through further training.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective**
 - Arrangements for safeguarding are effective, including in residential accommodation that is suitable for keeping young people safe. Effective practices are in place for the safe recruitment of staff, with all necessary staff checks carried out and appropriately recorded. Staff undertake regular training to ensure that they keep up to date with developments and topics related to learner and apprentice safety. Staff place an extremely strong focus on health and safety, which learners and apprentices demonstrate in their practical work and in the workplace.
 - Learners and apprentices have a very good understanding of the health and safety issues relating to their chosen profession and have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Managers evaluate regularly health and safety issues at course meetings, with any incidents analysed so that lessons can be learned from them.

- Staff are aware of their 'Prevent' duty and have had training so that they can ensure that learners and apprentices are aware of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism and how to deal with them. Learners on the intensive study programme have an in-depth understanding of these issues and how they relate to their life and the workplace. The majority of apprentices have a good understanding of extremism and radicalisation, but a minority have a more superficial knowledge. Staff are aware of this and they are implementing strategies to improve.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Learners and apprentices make very good progress and develop skills and achieve qualifications that prepare them very well for working in the horseracing industry. Well-qualified teachers and workplace trainers use their experience well to enrich learning. NRC staff are well regarded in the horseracing industry.
- Teachers and trainers have high expectations of learners and apprentices and inspire them to be successful in their learning. On the study programme, teachers use a good range of activities in lessons to engage learners. Teachers reinforce learning well through regular reference to industrial practice and standards. They use good assessment and feedback techniques to manage learning and track learners' progress.
- Teachers do not ensure sufficiently that learners and apprentices have a record of their learning outcomes to reinforce their learning and for future reference. Teachers' planning of a minority of lessons requires improvement. In these lessons, learners do not make the progress they are capable of and activities to support individualised learning are weak.
- Trainers provide good and flexible support to meet individual apprentices' needs. Trainers make good use of learning resources and assignments to support the development of apprentices' background knowledge. Apprentices use a wide range of evidence in their portfolios to demonstrate their successful achievement of competences. Trainers make insufficient use of written feedback on apprentices' work to ensure that apprentices understand key points for improvement.
- Learners and apprentices make good use of information communication technology to support their learning in lessons. The use of e-learning to support independent study is in the early stages of development.
- Teachers make good use of practical teaching to challenge learners to succeed. Teachers match very well the riding ability of each learner to the most suitable horse. Learners make rapid progress in developing their confidence and skills in equitation. The alternative practical programme for learners who opt not to ride is equally good.
- Teachers and trainers place a strong emphasis on ensuring that learners and apprentices develop very good employability skills and safe working practices. They prepare learners particularly well for work in the racehorse industry. Teachers and trainers place a strong emphasis on developing learners' and apprentices' personal and social skills, such as respect, motivation, confidence and self-resilience.
- Learners and apprentices with additional learning needs have effective support to make progress and achieve their qualifications. They do not receive enough support to develop further their skills so that they can cope better with their additional learning needs in lessons.
- The teaching of English and mathematics in discrete lessons is good and the intensive support for apprentices is effective. Teachers provide learners with good support to develop their mathematics, technical language and listening and speaking communication skills in lessons. Recent changes to the teaching of writing skills, such as creative writing, have improved learner outcomes but it is too soon to evaluate the full impact of these changes. Teachers and trainers make insufficient use of diagnostic assessment to identify gaps in learners' English and mathematical skills to inform their teaching practice.
- Well-trained observers skilfully evaluate the standards of teaching, learning and assessment through lesson observations. Teachers who are required to improve their professional practice because of these observations receive prompt support to improve. Lesson observation records are effectively analysed to identify aspects that require improvement and plans for improvement and sharing of good practice are agreed. Actions to evaluate their impact in teaching, learning and assessment practice are not thorough enough.
- Teachers and trainers monitor learners' progress very effectively and use very good intervention strategies to ensure that learners stay on target to complete their learning. Specialist staff and external agencies provide learners with very good personal and pastoral support.
- Teachers support learners to set very effective personalised learning targets. Teachers encourage learners to reflect regularly on their practice and to evaluate their performance in order to improve.

Apprentices take responsibility for their own learning through effective target setting and action planning, and make good progress towards their qualification.

- Learners benefit from a very well structured work experience programme that ensures that they are very well prepared for employment and supports their transition to an apprenticeship.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

- Learning programmes engage learners particularly well and enable them to develop skills, resilience and attributes that equip them very well for employment and for productive participation in modern Britain. They quickly develop the knowledge and skills that they need for successful employment in the horseracing industry. Learners' practical and written work is to a high standard.
- Learners are very happy, very proud of their work and particularly enjoy the challenge of learning in the college and in the workplace, considerably developing their motivation and confidence. Their attendance and punctuality are exemplary. Apprentices speak appreciatively of learning something new every day and feel that trainers and mentors guide them very well through their learning.
- Learners and apprentices, including those with additional personal and social needs, benefit greatly from the high-quality support that they receive from a range of staff, including trainers and specialist external agencies. As a result, the large majority of learners complete their qualifications and progress to further study, sustained employment or positions of responsibility at high-profile racehorse training stables.
- Teachers and trainers help successfully learners and apprentices to develop their skills in mathematics and use of English, particularly the development of their vocational language, associated with the horseracing industry and care of horses. Teachers contextualise effectively materials to support learners' studies in functional skills. Most learners and apprentices use information and communication technology (ICT) well to support their learning through research on the internet and to prepare work for assessments.
- Too few learners develop further their use of written English by taking notes in lessons or recording the detailed, developmental feedback given by trainers and teachers.
- Learners receive very good information to help them to select the programme that best suits their abilities and career aspirations and as a result few learners leave their course early. Learners and apprentices receive good guidance about their future study or employment options and the proportion that gain employment or continue to the next level of study is high.
- Learners and apprentices maintain their personal fitness and health very effectively. They undertake fitness classes at college and, those in work enrol with local fitness establishments. External organisations often sponsor the subscription fees for learners.
- Health and safety is rightly highly prioritised and strongly promoted. Learners and apprentices feel safe and demonstrate very high levels of safe working practices. They are fully aware of how to report any concerns they may have about possible safety risks to themselves or to others.
- Learners and apprentices have a very good understanding of safeguarding and what to do if an incident should occur. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe online through their induction and periodic reinforcement by teachers and trainers. When learners and apprentices raise concerns, managers investigate and deal with them appropriately and sensitively.

Outcomes for learners are good

- Learners and apprentices enjoy their studies and make very good progress. Both intermediate and advanced apprentices achieve very well, with high overall and timely achievement rates in the current year and for previous years. Learners achieve very well on their main qualification, and have done so for the last few years.
- Apprentices develop good work-related skills, as well as broader skills, such as reliability, which support them in becoming valued team members in bustling racing yards from early on in their course. Learners make rapid progress in developing their equestrian skills, with many showing significant improvements from their starting point in a very short space of time.
- Learners and apprentices develop their skills to meet exacting horseracing industry standards and, in many cases, exceed the requirements of their qualification. High numbers of learners and apprentices achieve additional qualifications, such as those in horse transport, which are in demand in the racing industry and relate well to individual career aims. All are very well prepared for their next step in their chosen industry.

- Staff have worked hard to ensure that they have detailed information about the destinations of learners and apprentices. They know the destinations for most learners who completed their course in the last academic year. The vast majority of learners progressed into employment or an apprenticeship. All apprentices, who completed their apprenticeship in the same period, continued into sustained employment, with many gaining additional responsibilities, such as mentoring new apprentices. Successful learners and apprentices are keen to support new learners and some, who have successfully achieved their training licence, have apprentices in their own yards.
- Apprentices achieve the required English and mathematics qualification as part of their course but learners have not achieved well on these qualifications in previous years. This year, learners have made much better progress in achieving their qualification in mathematics. They are developing better skills in English, particularly speaking and listening. Latterly English functional skills outcomes have improved, but it is too early to see the full impact of this on achievement rates. A few learners who have a GCSE grade D in mathematics or English at the start of their course do not improve their GCSE grade. They progress into employment and/or an apprenticeship before the examination dates and do not return to take the exams.
- There are no sustained differences in the achievement of males and females, those from different ethnic groups or ages. Learners from certain disadvantaged groups do underachieve when compared to their peers on the study programme for 2014/15. The gap between groups has narrowed in this academic year markedly.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- NRC offers a good intensive study programme to learners aged 16 to 19 on an 18-week intensive course. Seventy-nine learners have enrolled on courses so far this academic year, with nine currently on programme. Ten adults and nine learners aged 16 to 19 are on the same programme.
- Learners' achievement of their main qualification is good. Managers have implemented effective improvements to the structure and content of the programme through new initiatives such as widening the range of horses available, with different temperaments and abilities, to allow more learners the opportunity to ride, which increases their engagement. Learners are highly motivated to complete and achieve their qualifications.
- Learners' expectations are high and they perform routinely skills beyond the requirements of their course, including loading horses for travel and riding challenging horses independently on the gallops.
- Teaching is very effective. Learners make rapid progress on their courses. Constructive feedback on practical and written work is very effective in driving improvements in the quality of learners' work, and learners grow in confidence. Teaching staff are knowledgeable, experienced and enthusiastic. Learners value these attributes and are positive about how much their tutors inspire them.
- Initial assessment is successful in identifying learners' prior horse-related knowledge. Consequently, teaching of practical skills is very effective. Learners make rapid progress and move quickly into careers in their chosen industry.
- Careers advice fully prepares learners for their next steps in their careers. Learners understand well the options available to them. Advisers support well learners who choose not to enter the racing industry to find alternative career paths in the animal and wider equestrian sectors. Advice on the type of racing that would be suited to learners according to their abilities and ambitions is well tailored and allows learners to make informed decisions on their future.
- Learners develop employability skills to a very high standard. Learners demonstrate very high levels of attendance and punctuality and are fastidious in their attitudes to both. Learners develop very successfully the wider skills of team working, communication, courtesy and empathy through the main programme and additional taught activities relating to becoming more self-aware. Learners demonstrate a very good understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism and can apply these effectively to the workplace.
- Learners feel safe and supported at the college, both on their programme and while living in residential accommodation. They develop their fitness levels significantly to meet the expectations of the industry in which they intend to work. Additional fitness sessions are personalised and learners receive regular feedback on their progress. Learners value these sessions and develop a good understanding of the importance of their fitness.
- Learners' progression into employment and further training on an apprenticeship is very good. Learners complete well-planned and well-managed work experience placements. NRC uses its network of

employers particularly well to provide learners with highly individualised placements that meet the needs of both the learners and employers.

- Teachers support effectively learners to develop their mathematics and English in both functional skills and vocational sessions. They integrate mathematics into most stable management and theory lessons and develop learners' use of technical language and highly relevant communication skills in listening and speaking, such as giving feedback on the performance of a horse to a trainer.
- In discrete English lessons, teachers develop effectively learners' English skills by individualising tasks and effectively promoting individual areas of interest. Very recently, learners' progress towards achieving their English qualifications, particularly the written element, has improved. A few learners with grade D in GCSE maths and/or English make progress towards completing their qualification but do not get the opportunity to sit the examination, which is often after they have gained an apprenticeship or a job. Teachers make insufficient use in their lessons of the specific areas for development of each learner's English and mathematics, as identified by their initial assessment.
- In a small minority of theory sessions, teachers plan insufficiently well to allow for all learners to develop their knowledge. Learners do not routinely take notes in theory sessions and teachers miss key opportunities to develop learners' written skills. Learners do not routinely have a record of the learning that has taken place in lessons for use later in their programmes or careers.

Apprenticeships

are good

- NRC provides apprenticeships for the horseracing industry. There are currently 121 apprentices in training, of whom 88 are on intermediate and 33 on advanced apprenticeships.
- Leaders' and managers' drive to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been successful in accelerating apprentices' progress. Most apprentices make good or better progress and are on target to complete their qualifications on time.
- Apprentices develop very good work-related, personal and social skills. They all develop self-confidence and reliance and integrate into a busy horseracing yard very quickly.
- Trainers are enthusiastic, experienced practitioners with good occupational knowledge that they use well in coaching apprentices to understand the concepts behind their practice. For example, trainers encouraged the apprentices to use the correct Latin terminology for anatomy that ensures that apprentices have accurate and purposeful discussions with veterinary surgeons and farriers. Employers ensure that apprentices work alongside these professionals to increase their knowledge and experience further.
- Most trainers use an effective range of learning and assessment activities, including discussions, videos and presentations, to capture apprentices' interests and motivation. Trainers use social media to post interactive quizzes to allow apprentices to test their knowledge and skills. Trainers ensure that their workplace visits to assess apprentices have minimal disruption on the business, for example by visits out of hours or by attending race meetings.
- Most trainers plan training and assessments well to meet the different needs of apprentices based on their prior learning and experience. Managers and trainers do not always ensure that supervisors or workplace mentors take a full role in appraising apprentice performance and setting and measuring skills development targets.
- Trainers provide good verbal feedback to apprentices with clear guidance on how they can improve. Trainers use questioning techniques skilfully to establish the level of apprentices' understanding and to challenge them to extend their knowledge and skills. Apprentices do not make their own records about what they need to do to improve for their future reference.
- Apprentices have a high level of health, fitness and safety awareness. Many have gym membership and are keen to maintain their fitness and riding weight. Apprentices ensure that they apply the correct practice of washing their hands before and after putting on personal protective clothing and handling horses. Many can accurately identify health issues in horses. For example, one apprentice identified a suspected case of ringworm and had the horse correctly isolated before the veterinary surgeon arrived.
- The majority of apprentices are developing English and mathematical skills well. They are able to apply their mathematics skills in the workplace, working out speed times and weights for racehorses. The standard of apprentices' writing is generally good. However, apprentices have insufficient opportunities to practise these skills in the workplace beyond the requirements of the qualification.
- Apprentices acquire a wide range of very good workplace skills that employers value, such as yard work, riding out, leading out at race meeting events and preparing horses on behalf of owners. Many gain riding licences and progress from point-to-point to novice races, with a significant minority going on to ride race

winners. Consequently, most apprentices remain in employment on completing their training. Well-regarded trainers use their highly effective partnerships with employers to ensure that they meet the needs of apprentices. They work well with employers to provide highly effective personal and pastoral support to apprentices. Apprentices receive very good pastoral support from a specialist welfare charity to ensure that they stay in training and successfully complete their qualifications.

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	310
Principal/CEO	Stephen Padgett
Website address	www.northernracingcollege.co.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 and above	
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	9	10	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	66	22	9	24	N/A	N/A		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	5		N/A		5			
Number of learners aged 14–16	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Simon Cutting, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Heather Barnett	Her Majesty's Inspector
Martin Bennett	Ofsted Inspector
Ralph Brompton	Ofsted Inspector
Julia Gray	Ofsted Inspector
Priscilla McGuire	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the operations director, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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