



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT SEPTEMBER 1998

REINSPECTION AUGUST 1999

Kent Equine Industry Training Services Limited

SUMMARY

Kent Equine Industry Training Services Limited (KEITS) offers training in horse care and small animal care. At the first inspection, training in agriculture was unsatisfactory, but KEITS has since significantly improved its training which is now satisfactory. The company has developed exceptionally good relationships with a range of equine centres throughout the Kent area. Trainees are employed in good-quality work placements, which are well resourced. Trainee support was also unsatisfactory, but is now good. Induction is comprehensive and trainees are well supported in the workplace. Trainees' progress is effectively monitored. Management of training was unsatisfactory but is now satisfactory. However, although the company has successfully developed work-based assessors, support for these assessors by KEITS is poor. Quality assurance was poor, but is also now satisfactory. Quality assurance procedures are reviewed frequently. KEITS uses the results of external audits and self-assessment as an integral part of its quality assurance system to improve training. Since the first inspection, KEITS has implemented an internal verification system but the system is not effective and does not provide constructive feedback to assessors to ensure the quality of the assessment process.

As a result of the reinspection of KEITS, the original published report text for agriculture, trainee support, management of training and quality assurance, has been replaced by new text which makes reference to the original inspection findings. This summary page, the overall report introduction and the inspection findings introduction have also been amended to reflect the findings of the reinspection. The equal opportunities section of the original published report, which has not been subject to full reinspection, has been left in its original form.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Agriculture	4

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	4
Management of training	4
Quality assurance	5

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Agriculture	3

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Trainee support	2
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good working relationships among staff, employers and trainees
- ◆ good on-the-job resources
- ◆ effective development of workplace assessors
- ◆ well-planned support for trainees



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- ◆ effective monitoring of trainees' progress
- ◆ continuous self-assessment

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no review or evaluation of training
- ◆ lack of consistency in assessment practice
- ◆ poor supervision of newly qualified workplace assessors
- ◆ unstructured internal verification system



INTRODUCTION

1. Kent Equine Industry Training Services Limited (KEITS) was established in June 1997. Since the first inspection in September 1998, it has expanded and now has two directors, a learning support and quality assurance manager and a training manager. Additional staff are employed on a contract basis for special projects, such as developing key skills. KEITS operates from a central office in Maidstone. All training is carried out in the workplace. Trainees work towards NVQs at levels 2 and 3 in horse care. Trainees also undertake British Horse Society (BHS) qualifications at stages 1, 2 and 3. KEITS recruits young people who are already working in the equine industry. Trainees are on modern apprenticeship programmes and are employed in equine centres throughout Kent. The company has expanded its training provision and now offers NVQs in small animal care. Training is offered to young people through a contract with The Learning & Business Link Company, formally known as Kent Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). The number of young people in training has increased since inspection last year and there are now 69 trainees on government-funded training programmes.

2. In 1997, unemployment in Kent was 5.4 per cent, compared with the national average of 5.1 per cent. Unemployment among those aged 18 to 24 constitutes 23 per cent of the area's unemployed. In Maidstone, the proportion of those from minority ethnic groups is low, at 1.7 per cent.

3. The proportion of 16 year-olds who stay in education in Kent is 77 per cent. Those leaving full-time education and entering employment which provides training were primarily in administration, sales, skilled construction, personal services and motor trades. In 1998, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 49.2 per cent, compared with the national average of 46.3 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. KEITS produced its first self-assessment report in February 1998. Staff from the company attended training days on the self-assessment process. Following team meetings, one director assumed overall responsibility for producing the report. It identified some strengths which were judged by inspectors to be no more than normal practice and others which were inaccurate. Inspectors identified significant weaknesses in all areas, and the grades awarded were lower than those given by the company, with the exception of equal opportunities. The company produced its action plan in December 1998. Since then, managers have reviewed the company's performance against its targets continually, to monitor improvements. Prior to reinspection, KEITS carried out a second self-assessment and re-graded all aspects of its training.

5. At the first inspection, two inspectors spent a total of six days at KEITS during September 1998. Inspectors examined company records and trainees' files. They met members of staff, interviewed 14 trainees and five workplace supervisors and employers, and visited five equine centres.

6. Reinspection was carried out by two inspectors over a total of six days during August 1999. Inspectors interviewed 16 trainees taking the equine qualification. They examined trainees' work and files, company records, business plans, internal and external verification reports and quality assurance documents. Inspectors interviewed three staff and six employers.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the first inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Agriculture		2		1	1	4
Total	0	2	0	1	1	4

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at reinspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Agriculture		1	2			3
Total	0	1	2	0	0	3



OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Agriculture (equine studies)

Grade 3

7. Since the first inspection, the number of trainees undertaking NVQs in horse care has increased from 39 to 69 trainees. Fifty-five are modern apprentices and 14 are national trainees. KEITS has now obtained approval to award NVQs in horse and small animal care and key skills. All trainees are employed in equine centres, offering a variety of work experiences, including livery, competition training and riding schools. All training is carried out on the job. At work, trainees attend lectures on the theoretical aspects of training. Practical training includes riding lessons and instruction in horse care. Trainees are employed at 29 yards throughout Kent. KEITS has continued to promote the development of work-based assessors, and there are 16 qualified assessors and a further 12 working towards assessor qualifications. KEITS has recently been granted centre approval to offer assessor training and development. Trainees are now being assessed for key skills, which was under development during the first inspection. Key skills are introduced at the beginning of the trainees' training programme.

8. New staff have been employed to support existing members of the team and improve areas which were originally under-resourced. The company is now clearly focused on NVQ achievement, although trainees are still encouraged to undertake BHS qualifications as well.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ no NVQ assessment
- ◆ assessment strategy creates barriers to trainees' progress and achievement
- ◆ inadequate monitoring of trainees' achievements
- ◆ poor awareness, by trainees, of the training programme
- ◆ no implementation of key skills
- ◆ inadequate monitoring of health and safety

9. The provider's action plan and updated self-assessment report outlined the measures that had been taken to improve the quality of the training programme. KEITS re-graded this aspect at grade 3, which is the same grade as that awarded by inspectors.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ excellent resources in workplace
- ◆ good on-the-job training
- ◆ good progress towards achievement

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of consistent assessment practice
- ◆ some poor-quality portfolios of evidence

10. Workplaces have excellent resources including well-tended good riding horses, indoor riding areas and lecture facilities, and additional resources including videos and books. There is now comprehensive monitoring of health and safety. Trainees also have good access to a laptop computer, supplied by KEITS, to develop their information technology skills. Assessors take the computer to the workplace and time is set aside for individual tuition and guidance. Practical lessons are structured and competently taught by well-qualified and motivated staff. Trainees have frequent training opportunities, with lessons held twice a week in most yards and, in some yards, daily. Theoretical sessions are comprehensive and provide a good level of understanding, which helps trainees to develop their practical skills. Training is tailored to meet the needs of trainees and accommodates their different levels of riding experience. Trainees are now monitored regularly and are now adequately aware of the requirements of the training programme.

11. Trainees are set realistic goals and make good progress towards their overall qualification aim. In many cases, trainees progress through their qualification more rapidly than was originally planned. The number of early leavers has significantly decreased since the first inspection, with 92 per cent of trainees still in training. Twenty trainees have now achieved NVQ level 2 and 12 have completed their level 3.

12. Assessment is now carried out regularly in the workplace. The standard and detail of assessment varies between assessors. Some assessors use a set of comprehensive recording methods and procedures, with detailed assessment records that clearly identify the assessment process and the evidence produced to assess competence. However, some assessors rely on a 'tick' box recording system that does not identify what was observed or produced during the assessment process. Some trainees' portfolios lack a diversity of evidence. Assessment methods used are mainly direct observation, oral questioning and witness testimonies. Although some trainees complete question and answer sheets to confirm their knowledge and understanding, portfolios do not always contain this evidence.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

13. KEITS has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy which is clearly written and covers the requirements of current legislation. The company also has a statement of intent which reinforces the company's commitment to equality issues

and encourages openness in problem-solving. There are no contractual targets set by Kent TEC. Inspectors judged the strengths and weaknesses in the company's self-assessment report to be accurate, and the grade awarded was the same as that proposed by the company.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ comprehensive and clearly written equal opportunities policy
- ◆ policy is effectively communicated to the workplace
- ◆ good staff awareness of equality issues

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no formal complaints procedure
- ◆ data on trainees not used to set targets
- ◆ no attempts to recruit under-represented groups

14. Equal opportunities are a standard agenda item at staff meetings. Trainees are given a copy of the policy during induction or shortly afterwards. The company has yet to develop its marketing materials, but initial promotional flyers do not include an equal opportunities statement. All staff were involved in the development of the company's equal opportunities policy and demonstrate a breadth of understanding of equality issues. KEITS promotes equality of opportunity in the workplace by issuing all centres with its policy. In one centre, the policy is prominently displayed on the company's noticeboard. Trainees are well informed about equality issues and keep a copy of the policy in their work folder.

15. The company has not yet developed a formal system for dealing with trainees' complaints; problems are handled informally. Trainees are monitored in terms of gender, ethnicity and disability, but the resultant data are not analysed to inform decisions. Traditionally, equine studies have attracted female trainees. The ratio of male trainees to female trainees is one in ten. The company is still developing its procedures, however, there are no plans to target men or any other under-represented group.

Trainee support

Grade 2

16. Since the first inspection, there have been considerable improvements made to the level of support trainees receive. KEITS has introduced initial and key skills assessments, forged links with careers offices and external agencies, and developed careers guidance information. The company has implemented a programme of improvements to ensure that trainees are placed on the appropriate training

programmes with the required level of support. All trainees are interviewed and a detailed interview record is made. Careers aspirations and further qualification options are discussed. Individual training plans take into account trainees' level of experience, knowledge and previous qualifications. Trainees are given timely guidance and information on further academic courses and career and employment opportunities.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ no initial assessment of trainees
- ◆ poor identification of trainees' prior experience and qualifications
- ◆ no links with external organisations
- ◆ ineffective progress reviews
- ◆ no support for those trainees with learning difficulties
- ◆ no careers advice available

17. The company's self-assessment report accurately identified the improvements that have been made in this area. Most of the weaknesses identified during the first inspection have been remedied and comprehensive support arrangements have been implemented.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good pastoral support for trainees
- ◆ comprehensive induction programme
- ◆ effective initial assessment process
- ◆ well-planned support for trainees with learning difficulties

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ some trainees' reviews lack clear target-setting
- ◆ support in the workplace not formally monitored or recorded

18. The induction programme is effective and ensures that trainees are fully aware of the content of their training programmes. All trainees are employed and are introduced to their training at their place of work. The induction process is thorough and trainees undertake three assignments covering all aspects of their training, including their role in the workplace, health and safety, and equal opportunities. Trainees are clear about their roles and responsibilities and what is expected of them in order to complete their qualification. KEITS' staff visit trainees at least every eight weeks to monitor and review their progress and to ensure that progress is being made. Reviews are clearly recorded and a copy is left with trainees to

ensure that they know what is expected of them. However, not all reviews clearly identify interim target dates for trainees to work towards. General comments indicating that the trainees are 'on target' for their overall qualification are recorded, but no short-term goals are agreed.

19. Individual training plans are well documented and record individual dates for each element of the trainees' modern apprenticeship or national traineeship programme. Where appropriate, trainees are given a basic skills test, which is rigorously marked and analysed to establish any additional support needs. For those trainees with a good level of entry qualifications, a key skills assessment is carried out. This assessment is constantly being reviewed and developed to ensure it is both 'trainee-friendly' and has the level of sophistication required to identify key skills development needs. Trainees with learning difficulties who do require additional support are given frequent individual sessions and additional work to complete in their own time. Support is developed to meet trainees' individual needs and staff use a mix of everyday work and leisure tasks to develop their confidence and skill level. Trainees are supported in the workplace by both their supervisors and staff from KEITS. Any problems trainees' have are addressed promptly and trainers visit trainees on request, if a problem arises. Staff contact external agencies for trainees with financial problems, and have supported trainees when it is not clear how they are going to be remunerated for the training.

20. Although support is discussed with, and provided by, workplace assessors, there is no formal monitoring of progress made. Support arrangements are not systematically recorded.

Management of training

Grade 3

21. Since the first inspection, KEITS has appointed a new director and additional staff. It has taken effective and speedy action to remedy the weaknesses identified during the first inspection. New staff have been employed to ensure that the training programme is adequately resourced. The company has clear procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff. There is a staff appraisal system and all staff have clearly defined roles. The company continues to develop its key skills training.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ no management of on-the-job training
- ◆ under-resourced training programme
- ◆ no review or evaluation of training and assessment
- ◆ management information not used to inform decision-making

22. The company's action plan clearly identified the measures that have been taken

to remedy the weaknesses. In its second self-assessment report, KEITS re-graded this area at grade 3.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ prompt action taken to remedy training issues
- ◆ effective training programme for assessors
- ◆ comprehensive tracking and monitoring of trainees' progress
- ◆ highly productive working relationships with employers

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor supervision of new assessors
- ◆ insufficient management of contracted staff

23. KEITS' staff act promptly to remedy any issues that affect trainees and their progress towards their learning goals. Problems are dealt with openly and all parties are kept up to date with developments through good communication. KEITS effectively promotes and fully supports the professional development of work-based assessors by making assessor training an obligatory part of its contract with employers. This action has resulted in a significant increase in the availability of assessors to the equine industry. However, newly qualified workplace assessors are not fully supported by KEITS and many are unsure exactly what the extent of their role is with KEITS. Some assessors do not understand the company's documents and reports on trainees are completed to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the interpretation by individuals.

24. The new tracking system that KEITS has introduced to monitor trainees' progress is highly effective. The system is simple, and user-friendly, yet enables managers to instantly view trainees' progress. Managers monitor dates of progress reviews, achievement of individual NVQs, retention, awarding body registration and key skills development. The system is updated daily and reviewed on a monthly basis.

25. KEITS uses five staff on a contract basis to carry out key skills work, assessment and internal verification. Although there are regular team meetings, there is little monitoring of their performance. This has resulted in some staff using their own internal verification and assessment documents rather than those developed by KEITS, and adopting different methods of working than those expected by KEITS' without the management always being aware of this. There is inadequate monitoring of staff's activities, and an over-reliance on contracted staff to carry out company procedures without strict guidelines to ensure consistency. Good working relationships with employers are maintained through frequent visits and discussions with employers about trainees. Employers and supervisors



telephone KEITS to ask for advice.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

26. KEITS has acted promptly to address the weaknesses identified in quality assurance during the first inspection. It has carried out a total review of its quality assurance system and has developed and implemented procedures and policies which cover the main aspects of the training provision. The company has appointed a quality-assurance manager and a 'service specification' outlines all the company's procedures. An internal verification system has been implemented. All trainees are registered with the awarding body as soon as they have completed their induction programme. KEITS employs an external health and safety officer to carry out risk assessments in the workplace.

At the first inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ irregularities in internal verification procedures
- ◆ quality assurance procedures do not ensure quality of training
- ◆ feedback is not systematically sought from trainees or employers
- ◆ risk assessments are not carried out in the workplace

27. KEITS' action plan clearly reflects the improvements that have been made in quality assurance. The provider re-graded this area at grade 3.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clear quality-assurance cycle
- ◆ effective external audit of quality-assurance procedures
- ◆ continuous monitoring of self-assessment action plan

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no procedure to evaluate quality of training
- ◆ unstructured internal verification system

28. KEITS has developed a quality-assurance cycle, which identifies when each aspect of the quality-assurance system is to be monitored and reviewed. Reviews are carried out as part of the company's tracking system. The reviews include the development of work-based assessors, retention issues, external relationships, trainee and employer evaluation questionnaires, internal verification and a full contract review. All staff are aware of when each element of training is being reviewed, and outcomes and improvements are minuted with action points for



improvement clearly identified. However, there is no review of on-the-job training. Feedback from trainees focuses on the service provided by KEITS and does not explore their views and feedback on the quality of the training offered in the yards. Any review of training is informal and is not part of the quality-assurance system.

29. KEITS has invested in external audits of its quality-assurance procedures. External reports have been evaluated and recommendations acted upon. Since the first inspection, KEITS has produced an action plan which has been continuously monitored and updated in line with the developments made and in conjunction with the quality-assurance cycle. The company has reviewed the whole of its training provision and produced a comprehensive second self-assessment report. It is using the self-assessment process as an integral part of its quality-assurance system.

30. Although an internal verification system has been introduced, it is not yet working effectively. Feedback to assessors is sporadic and varies depending on the internal verifier. Different verifiers use different documents, rather than those required by KEITS. Feedback from some internal verifiers focuses on re-assessing the trainee rather than providing constructive support for the assessor. The internal verifier and assessor do not sign internal verification records. There is no overarching internal verification plan, which describes the process and ensures that assessors are verified across the whole award throughout the year.