

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT
OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION
OCTOBER TO NOVEMBER 2001

Northern Racing College



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- ◆ work-based training for all people over 16
- ◆ provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- ◆ the University for Industry's *learndirect* provision
- ◆ adult and community learning
- ◆ training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Grading

In summarising their judgements about the quality of provision in curriculum or occupational areas and about the quality of leadership and management, including quality assurance and equality of opportunity, inspectors use a five-point scale. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- ◆ grade 1 – outstanding
- ◆ grade 2 – good
- ◆ grade 3 – satisfactory
- ◆ grade 4 – unsatisfactory
- ◆ grade 5 – very weak.

SUMMARY

The original inspection of Northern Racing College was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in less than satisfactory grades being awarded for management of training and quality assurance. These areas have been reinspected against the requirements of the *Common Inspection Framework* by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, which replaced the Training Standards Council on 1 April 2001. The sections of the original report dealing with management of training and quality assurance have been replaced with the findings of the reinspection. Also, the report summary, report introduction and introduction to the inspection findings have been updated and reflect the findings of the reinspection. Sections of the report, dealing with areas which have not been reinspected, have been left in their original form. The amended inspection report is published on the Adult Learning Inspectorate's website (www.ali.gov.uk).

Northern Racing College now provides satisfactory work-based learning in racehorse care. Learners benefit from an extensive range of training resources. They have good opportunities to develop riding skills at a high level and work environments are challenging. Work-based learning takes place on an informal basis and learners' assessment portfolios are not effectively developed. There is good pastoral support for learners, but progress reviews are weak. Although equal opportunities is well promoted throughout the organisation, there is insufficient understanding of equal opportunities by employers. The college has introduced a good strategy for the development of work-based learning and is managing this effectively, although the co-ordination of on-the-job training and assessment is under-developed. Management information is used to good effect. There are strong and productive links with the racing industry, although some employers do not take sufficient responsibility for learners' programmes. The college systematically monitors and tracks learners' progress and utilises good systems for the collection of employer and learner feedback. There is an effective quality improvement strategy that has led to significant improvements, but systems and procedures are not sufficiently developed and do not yet fully apply to on-the-job training.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Agriculture	4

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

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Agriculture	3

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ extensive range of training resources
- ◆ challenging work environments with good career progression
- ◆ good marketing to attract under-represented groups into training
- ◆ good pastoral support
- ◆ effective use of management information
- ◆ strong and productive links with the racing industry

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficiently structured work-based learning
- ◆ under-developed co-ordination of on-the-job training and assessment
- ◆ weak quality assurance of on-the-job training
- ◆ insufficient emphasis given by some employers to learners' training programmes

INTRODUCTION

1. Northern Racing College was established in 1984. It is a registered charity limited by guarantee. The college is near Bawtry, in South Yorkshire. Facilities include 35 racehorses, an indoor riding school and training gallops. It is one of two racing schools in the country which offer specialist training for the horse-racing industry. It trains new recruits to the racing industry and existing staff within the industry. At the time of the original inspection, the college received 26 per cent of its funding through the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), from a franchise agreement with a local further education college. This provided the funding for learners' first 10 weeks of off-the-job training, which is held at the college. Not all learners required this foundation-level training. As this training was funded by the FEFC, it did not form part of the original inspection. This franchise agreement remains and, at reinspection, the college receives 16 per cent of its income from this source. Twenty-two per cent of the funding comes from grants from the horse-racing industry. The college also receives 30 per cent of funding from the European Social Fund (ESF), 5 per cent from the local authority and 10 per cent from its own fund-raising activities. The National Training Provider (NTP) provides 17 per cent of the funding for the on-the-job training only.

2. At the original inspection, there were 12 full-time members of staff and one part-time member of staff, who were based at the Northern Racing College. There were 17 other people, contracted on a regular basis, to support or provide various aspects of the college's activities, which include marketing, assessment and internal verification. At reinspection, the number of full-time members of staff had increased to 14 and the number of other staff had reduced to 10. At the original inspection, there were 114 learners. Of these, 21 learners were on other work-based learning programmes for young people, 76 were foundation modern apprentices and 17 were advanced modern apprentices. At reinspection, the total had increased to 147, with 104 foundation modern apprentices, 34 advanced modern apprentices and nine following national vocational qualification (NVQ) training. Barnsley and Doncaster Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) was the co-ordinating TEC for the purpose of the original inspection. At reinspection, NTP fulfilled this role.

3. Since 1993, the stewards of The Jockey Club have enforced a mandatory youth training scheme for all stable employees entering the industry under the age of 19. Recruits must attend the introductory courses at either of the industry's two training establishments. The course at the Northern Racing College is funded by the FEFC, the other training establishment's course is funded by the TEC. The mandatory requirement will only be waived in exceptional circumstances, which must be acceptable to the stewards of The Jockey Club. These circumstances would be that a learner has sufficient previous experience of working with horses to already be above the foundation level reached on this course. Of the current

learners, there are 17 who are exempt from attending the course at Northern Racing College. Following this 10-week residential course, learners are able to progress to NVQs at level 2, which they complete in the workplace. Learners are required to attend off-the-job training at six-monthly intervals. The Jockey Club enforces a minimum wage, which is directly related to the achievement of an NVQ in racehorse care.

4. The horse-racing industry is expanding and employment prospects in the industry are good. All learners are guaranteed employment when they complete their NVQs at level 1. Not many progress to NVQs at level 3.

5. Although the college recruits learners from the whole country, a significant proportion are from South Yorkshire, where in June 2000 unemployment was 4.9 per cent, compared with a national average of 3 per cent. In 2000, the proportion of school leavers in South Yorkshire achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) averaged 38.5 per cent, compared with the national average of 49.2 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

6. The self-assessment report was produced in February 2000 before the original inspection. Five members of staff had updated it over the previous five months. Learners and employers were not consulted. The self-assessment report covered all activities of the Northern Racing College and many of the strengths and weaknesses identified were applicable to training which was outside the scope of the original inspection. Inspectors agreed with the grades awarded for equal opportunities and trainee support. Lower grades were awarded for the occupational area, management of training and quality assurance sections. The college has updated its self-assessment report over the past year and inspectors were able to make use of this more recent self-assessment. A pre-inspection commentary and report was produced, describing how the college has remedied the weaknesses identified during the original inspection. The pre-inspection commentary proposed revised grades for those areas being reinspected.

7. The original inspection was carried out by a team of three inspectors, who spent a total of 21 days, from October to December 2000, inspecting the work-based learning provision of the Northern Racing College. Inspectors interviewed 56 learners, 30 employers and workplace supervisors and 13 members of staff. They visited 38 different racing stables situated from North Yorkshire to the south of England. At the request of the organisation, inspectors conducted a telephone interview with the national chief verifier for the awarding body. They observed 20 progress reviews conducted in the workplace. Inspectors examined a range of supporting evidence. This included minutes of staff meetings, learners' files and portfolios, the awarding body's documents and internal and external verifiers' reports.

8. The reinspection was carried out by a team of two inspectors, who spent a total of 10 days at the Northern Racing College during October and November 2001. Inspectors visited 33 learners at 12 training locations in Lancashire, Berkshire, Wiltshire, Staffordshire, Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire. They met 13 employers and supervisors, 14 racing college staff and inspected a wide range of learners' assessment portfolios, personal files and other policies and procedures, training materials, handbooks and minutes of meetings.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Agriculture (equine studies)

Grade 3

9. The Northern Racing College provides training leading to NVQs at levels 1 and 2 in racehorse care and to NVQs at level 3 in racehorse care and management. There are 147 learners, of whom 9 are on other work-based learning programmes, 104 are foundation modern apprentices and 34 are advanced modern apprentices. All advanced modern apprentices have been on foundation modern apprenticeships or other work-based learning programmes and achieved NVQs at level 2 in racehorse care, before moving to the NVQ at level 3. One hundred and twelve learners are following NVQs at level 2, of which 47 are working on the revised standards. Thirty-five are on NVQs at level 3, of which 14 are on the revised standards. All learners are employed in the work placements found for them by the college. They are working in 75 racing stables across the British Isles, which include flat-racing and national hunt stables. Most training is given in the workplace. There is a requirement to attend the college for one week every six months for off-the-job training and assessment. The staff who provide training are experienced in the racing industry. At the time of the original inspection, it was established that since 1998, out of 131 learners starting, 16 foundation modern apprentices had left early with no qualifications and 21 had left early with some qualifications. There were 19 foundation modern apprentices who had completed their individual learning programmes. Of the advanced modern apprentices, no learner had left early without any qualifications. Four had left early after achieving NVQs at level 3, but without completing their individual learning plans, but this was in 1997 and 1998. Of those learners who started their programmes in 1999, none have left early and no learner has completed their individual learning or programme framework. During the past year achievement and retention levels have remained consistent.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ no effective planning of work based training
- ◆ poor assessment practices
- ◆ missed assessment opportunities for learners taking NVQ's at level 3

10. Following the original inspection, Northern Racing College acted to build on the strengths and rectify the weaknesses. New documentation has been developed for the assessment of practical skills at level 2. Summary target sheets are now being used, which cross-refer to the NVQ at all three levels. A mentor system has been implemented with a target of a 100 per cent work-based coverage. At the time of the reinspection, there had been no formal training for mentors, although a detailed booklet has been prepared and given to mentors. Level 2 and level 3 NVQ learners are provided with portfolio packs covering knowledge and understanding for the NVQ award, but this is yet to be followed up in the workplace. The college has satisfactorily rectified the original weaknesses, and the strengths identified at

the reinspection recognise the development of the strengths from the original inspection. The pre-inspection commentary was accurate in identifying the effects of actions following the original inspection and the inspectors awarded the same grade as that proposed by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ extensive range of training resources
- ◆ good opportunities for learners to develop riding skills
- ◆ challenging work environment for learners

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ insufficiently structured work-based learning
- ◆ ineffective development of portfolios

11. The racing yards used in training, provide many and varied resources. Many yards are owned by the country's top trainers. A high number of yards have covered, lunging and schooling areas, all-weather gallops, equine swimming pools and horse walkers. One stable yard visited, has a designated rubber-covered trot-up area (an area where horses are trotted-up to assess soundness). The racing college has a large indoor riding area, all-weather gallops and a horse walker. Indoor resources include classroom, library and information technology (IT) area. Learners are able to observe and work with a wide range of horses which include yearlings being prepared for ridden work, young racehorses in training and mature steeplechasers. All college assessors are appropriately qualified. Seven out of eight assessors have achieved internal verifier qualifications.

12. Subject to their riding ability and progress, learners have the opportunity for fast work on the gallops. This represents a high level of learner achievement. One learner completing a level 2 NVQ, has ridden in 35 races and won one. Many learners will be riding two or three horses a morning, which includes slow work and fast exercise, as part of fitness preparation for the horses. Some of the horses are among the country's most successful ones. Learners with less experience are given the opportunity to develop their riding skills at a speed suitable to their needs.

13. Learners are placed in racing yards which suit their experience and abilities. Where a need is identified, a learner will be relocated. The daily routine undertaken by learners in the racing yards provides effective challenges for the learning process. There are good opportunities to learn skills in handling thoroughbred horses. Learners gain experience and knowledge of all aspects of health care and the management of horses. This includes, preparing horses for work, preparation for, and the transportation of, horses and accompanying horses to the races and sales. Learners taking NVQs at level 3 are given specific responsibility for organizing aspects of yard management, care of the tack room and assisting yard managers. Learners are encouraged to communicate with their

peers, line managers and the racehorse owners.

14. Training takes place in the workplace as and when it fits into the working day. Learners will learn new skills as the opportunities arise. The training has no formal planning and is not effectively monitored, recorded or reviewed. Some employers organise training thoroughly while others place greater emphasis on the commercial achievements of the business. Learners will return to the college when specific aspects of training and assessment cannot be covered in the workplace, such as plaiting, clipping and pulling manes.

15. All learners are given standard paperwork at the start of the programme. The information received by the learners is confirmed through the induction period. Learners receive information related to the contents of the portfolio, but do not receive sufficient instructions about how to develop the portfolios. The work presented in the portfolios is of a satisfactory level, but is not thorough in marking and referencing evidence for the qualification. Learners are not sufficiently encouraged in the use of a range of evidence sources, for assessment purposes. The wide range of activities carried out by learners in the workplace is not used for work-based evidence, particularly for level 3 NVQs. Witness testimony is not always well presented or explained. The development of learners' portfolios fails to make use of learning opportunities. Learners do not take sufficient responsibility for their own learning and rely too heavily on the college to drive the training and assessment process. There are individual assessment plans for learners, which identify individual targets for them. Some simulation is allowed in the NVQ, but in some cases too much reliance is placed on this method. Assessment records do not give the period of assessment activity, but refer to the date of final observation. There is only a small number of work-based assessors and most assessment is carried out by roving assessors.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

16. Northern Racing College has an equal opportunities policy and grievance procedure. The equal opportunities policy is distributed to trainees and staff. The policy was distributed to employers during the inspection, but before it was just shown to them. The agreement employers have to sign before taking on trainees includes employers' acceptance of the policy. Trainees receive information about equal opportunities during their induction at the college. The policy was reviewed during the inspection. Data are collected. Eleven trainees require additional learning support. One trainee is registered as having a disability and a further 10 also have disabilities. The inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses in the self-assessment report and they awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ successful promotion of training to under-represented groups
- ◆ prompt action to address grievances

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ poor understanding of equality of opportunity by employers

17. The college operates an effective marketing and recruitment system over a wide geographical area. There are 98 days of recruitment and publicity events in the current year. The careers events and open days attended include race days, local road shows, and major national equine events. A horse-racing celebrity has been engaged in a promotional recruitment exercise. This celebrity has been particularly successful in gaining access to schools for promotional events. The college promotes careers in equine industries through targeted presentations to schools and under-represented groups. Examples of targeted presentations and recruitment drives include promotions in former coalfield regions which are now regeneration areas and promotions to the probation service. The college has recruited trainees from overseas. Additional funding has been acquired for trainees from financially under-privileged groups. Taster days are organised throughout the year, which give potential trainees an insight into the college and the racing industry. Although work with horses has traditionally been more popular with women, 43 per cent of trainees at the college are men. Fifty per cent of trainees had no previous experience with horses when they first started with the college. Although marketing has been successful in some areas, the college has no trainees from minority ethnic groups. The only barrier imposed by the industry is a weight restriction, as only people below a certain weight can ride a racehorse. Trainees also need to be physically fit and able to cope with the job. Although promotional material distributed by the college mentions that the college is an equal opportunities employer, it does not mention equal opportunities for trainees.

18. All trainees know what action to take if a problem occurs. Problems occurring in work placements are referred to the head person in the racing stable in the first instance and to the college or monitoring officer in the second. All trainees know whom to contact at the college. When problems occur, prompt action is taken resulting in trainees moving to another yard or returning to the college until another suitable employer is found. All complaints are logged centrally by the college.

19. Data are collected on trainees' gender, ethnicity and disability, but are not always analysed. There is no record over the past two years of a review of equal opportunities at senior board or management level. The college has relied upon analysis of the industry provided by the jockey club to monitor its own performance. An equal opportunities officer has been appointed recently. The equal opportunities officer had training on equal opportunities provided by the local TEC during the inspection. This information has yet to be disseminated throughout the college. Equality of opportunity is not fully promoted to work-placement providers. Beyond traditional concerns such as sex discrimination,

employers and workplace supervisors have little awareness of equal opportunities. The college does not check that there is an equal opportunities policy in trainees' workplaces or monitor properly that all trainees are protected from discriminatory behaviour. Equal opportunities forms a specific item for discussion during progress reviews. This is to check on the trainees' welfare and to increase trainees' awareness of equal opportunities issues. The monitoring officer sees the head person in the racing yard or the workplace supervisor after seeing the trainee, to confirm the details.

Trainee support

Grade 3

20. Trainees are recruited nationally through national advertising, marketing at horse shows and through the careers service. Trainees do not need to have had riding experience before beginning their training. All trainees, apart from the few with sufficient previous experience, receive a 10-week induction programme at the college before moving to employment. The college finds employers for those trainees who have not secured this for themselves. In most cases, trainees move to employers after having achieved an NVQ at level 1 and the key skills required to begin the foundation modern apprenticeship framework. A full-time member of staff then monitors them in the workplace. This member of staff is responsible for 114 trainees in 70 stable yards across the country, the internal verification for all key skills and most of the equestrian trainees' NVQs, and also carries out assessment. The self-assessment report identified seven strengths and one weakness. Inspectors did not agree with the strengths identified, but did find others. They did agree with the one identified weakness and found other weaknesses. They awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

GOOD PRACTICE

Following a frightening incident with a horse, one trainee was very upset and was given no support by the racehorse trainer in the workplace. She resigned immediately, which left her homeless. The college's monitoring officer promptly offered her a place back at the college and addressed her accommodation problems. The trainee is now regaining her confidence through training at the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good pastoral support
- ◆ effective placement of trainees

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak identification of learning requirements for NVQ at level 3
- ◆ weak induction to NVQ at level 3
- ◆ poor progress-review process

21. On completion of the 10-week course at the college, trainees are offered employment in a stable yard suited to their needs and capabilities. Training staff at the stable yard use great care and their accumulated knowledge to place the trainees in a workplace which will ensure that they progress in a suitable working environment. Trainees are guaranteed employment. Vacancies are received directly from racehorse trainers by the college. There are more vacancies than there are trainees. Trainees tend to stay with their employer at the end of their

training, and the jockey club monitors the movement of those who transfer their employment within the industry. Swift and prompt action to remedy any problems in the workplace is taken. Trainees are confident that they can contact the college should problems arise. In the workplace, the trainees are visited every three months by monitoring officers and very good pastoral support is offered. The visiting member of staff knows all the trainees by name, knows their background and is concerned for their welfare. They have other specialist knowledge of all trainees such as whether or not trainees have ridden in races, or if they are awaiting a licence to ride in races. Some trainees are offered the chance to take part in trips abroad and special race days.

22. Trainees at all levels are issued with a textbook which helps them with the knowledge requirements of the NVQ. Once the trainees have completed the NVQ at level 2, they are then asked to choose whether or not they wish to progress onto the advanced modern apprenticeship. There are 17 trainees currently following NVQs at level 3 as advanced modern apprentices. If they do decide to become advanced modern apprentices, they complete the paperwork for this in the workplace. It is difficult to find a quiet place to talk with some trainees in their workplaces. No further assessment is given or undertaken to ensure that these trainees are capable of dealing with the higher and more exacting demands of the NVQ at level 3. There is no systematic induction to the framework. Trainees are given three handouts about the framework for inclusion in a portfolio. There is little guidance on the content of the portfolio. There is little discussion or written guidance to support trainees onto the apprenticeship route.

23. Although trainees' pastoral needs are taken care of, the review process to progress trainees in their qualifications is poor. Reviews take place with other members of staff present in the stabling yard while horses are being fed, clipped or tacked up. Sometimes reviews involve five trainees at once in the yard with some having to leave to do short tasks and returning later to complete the review. Some reviews take place outside the yard using a vehicle to rest paperwork on, and some are held in unsuitable conditions in often very busy tack rooms. Many progress-review records are not filled in completely, and very few involve the employer or contain their comments. Workplace supervisors sign the progress-review forms when the reviews are completed. There is no action-planning for the next assessment, and no records are made of the trainees' current progress or achievement. Often the trainees do not know that they are to be reviewed because the racehorse trainer or stable-yard staff have not passed on this information to them.

Management of training

Grade 3

24. There are 14 full-time members of staff employed by the college, most of whom are involved with the off-the-job training at the college. Three are directly involved with managing the training in the workplace. They are the director, who is also the chief executive, the training manager and the monitoring officer. All

these members of staff are based at the college. The monitoring officer has responsibility for internal verification and assessment, and co-ordinates the visiting assessors. The monitoring officer reports to the training manager, who also has responsibility for off-the-job trainers. The training manager reports to the chief executive. The college was reaccredited for the Investors in People standard in December 1999, which is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. There is a corporate and a financial plan.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ incomplete strategy to manage training in the workplace
- ◆ poor inclusion of employers in trainees' programmes

25. Following the original inspection, the college acted to build on the identified strengths and to rectify the weaknesses. There has been good progress in the development of a strategy to manage training in the workplace. Each employer has been asked to nominate a mentor and forward planning takes place which sets learners' training and development targets for six-monthly periods. The structure of training has been changed, so that learners attend the college for one week every six months, to receive training in those subjects unavailable at the employer's premises and to deal with outstanding assessment activities. Most employers are now more involved with learners' programmes, although some place an excessive priority on learner involvement with the commercial activities of the business, such as racing. The pre-inspection commentary was accurate in identifying the effect of the actions following the original inspection and inspectors awarded the same grade as that proposed by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good strategy for the development of work-based learning
- ◆ effective use of management information
- ◆ strong contacts with the racing industry

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ under-developed co-ordination of on-the-job training and assessment
- ◆ insufficient emphasis given by some employers to learners' training programmes

26. The college has prepared a good strategy for the development of work-based learning. This is reflected in the corporate and financial plan for the period 2000 to 2003 and links with the revised staff structure and self-assessment development plan prepared in October 2001. It has been identified that more frequent work-based assessments are required and the staffing structure has been adjusted accordingly. The college has developed and effectively introduced, a clear policy for managing work-based learning for modern apprentices. This includes more thorough and individual initial assessments, more regular monitoring at the start of the programme, more detailed workplace inductions, the forward planning of

training and assessment, and six-monthly return visits to the college for training and assessment. Central to the process is the appointment of workplace mentors to act as advocates for learners. The college has provided a mentoring handbook and the role is supported by the college's monitoring officer and roving assessors. Although a new initiative, this is well received by employers and learners alike. Some mentors have expressed the desire to attend the college for more structured training.

27. Effective use is made of management information. The college has developed a comprehensive database of information relating to individual learners and places a lot of importance on maintaining accurate records. Whenever an assessment, a quarterly review or internal verification is completed, the details are recorded. This allows the college to analyse achievement rates and produce reports on individual achievements. This is used to support the business-planning process and to help the college reach meaningful performance targets. Management information is used to inform staff of missing assessments, in advance of learners returning to the college, and to create activity lists for staff carrying out progress reviews. The incidence of early leavers is analysed and this has helped the college to identify problem areas and make appropriate management decisions to rectify the problems. Internal verifications for each learner, assessor and NVQ unit are available to those who are monitoring and improving the standard of the training programme.

28. Northern Racing College has established strong links with other organisations that are involved with racing. A link with a welfare trust for the industry has enabled learners who have been identified as having additional learning needs, to have one-to-one support in the workplace from a member of the welfare trust, to help them complete their NVQ at level 1. The link with another regulatory body has raised the standards of health and safety expected within racing yards. All yards now clearly display the industry's health and safety policy and learners have a good knowledge of the contents. College staff check for implementation of this policy when they review health and safety practices in the workplace. As part of a three-week potential jockey course, a link with an Irish training centre, for the racing industry in Kildare, enabled five learners to ride out for different racehorse trainers and visit racing establishments in Ireland. For some of the learners, this was their first time out of England. Employers appreciated this initiative and the college hopes to repeat the course. The chief executive is a member of a training advisory group of the racing industry, which links with the other racing school in the country to determine the standard of training and initiate improvements to the training of staff. The training manager is also a member of a group that reviews the awarding body's practice and procedures. The college also makes use of The Jockey Club's database of people working in the profession and follows its analysis of movement within the profession.

29. The co-ordination of on-the-job training and assessment is under-developed. Forward plans agreed between the college, the learner and the employer or mentor, do not link effectively with the agreed programme of workplace assessments. Most

learners have good on-the-job training, but this is not structured or planned. In the same way, the timing of assessment does not always match the routine activities of the learner and is often some considerable time after the learner has completed the relevant on-the-job training. The role of the mentor has not become sufficiently established for good co-ordination to take place. Where yards employ qualified assessors, on-going assessment linked to on-the-job training is much better organised.

30. Some employers do not place sufficient emphasis on the learners' individual learning programme and do not give them time off for study during the normal working week. Some employers expect learners to attend off-the-job-training sessions at the college in their own time and at their own cost. Visits by college staff to review performance and carry out assessments is hampered by learners being sent to the races at short notice, despite the college having made an appointment to meet with the learner and their supervisor. In some cases, daily work routines are not organised in a way which allows learners to be released for meetings with college staff.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

31. The college appointed a member of staff with responsibility for quality assurance within the college 11 months before the original inspection. The training co-ordinators' group has been formed to develop quality improvement initiatives and make recommendations to the management team. There are quality assurance procedures for the activities that take place at college. These have been further developed and apply to all aspects of the college's training and commercial activities.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ lack of rigour in internal verification
- ◆ weak quality assurance procedures for the workplace
- ◆ weak monitoring of paperwork

32. Assessors and verifiers have been provided with detailed guidance on the internal verification process, using information provided by the awarding body. Arrangements for the sampling of assessment activities have been introduced, together with standard documentation for the recording of verification. This has introduced a satisfactory level of thoroughness into internal verification. The process will be further improved with better planning and more organised records of internal verification. The monitoring of paperwork is now satisfactory. Individual learner's files have been reorganised and checks on the quality of paperwork regularly take place. Key dates are recorded on a central management information system and the college is able to monitor the completion of paperwork-based activities and remind staff where appropriate. The quality assurance procedures for the workplace remain under-developed and the college is not assuring the quality of learners' experiences during on-the-job training,

although the views of employers and supervisors is now being regularly sought and acted upon. The pre-inspection commentary was accurate in identifying the effect of the actions following the original inspection and inspectors awarded the same grade as that proposed by the college.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective strategies for improving training quality
- ◆ systematic monitoring of learner progress
- ◆ good collection of employer and learner feedback

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ recently introduced quality assurance systems and procedures
- ◆ weak quality assurance of on-the-job training

33. The college has introduced effective strategies to improve the quality of training. The training co-ordinators group made up of senior managers and practitioners meets regularly on a formal basis to formulate and carry out improvements. All staff understand the purpose of the group and feel free to contribute to the development of improvements to training. All staff contribute to the identification of strengths and weaknesses as part of the annual self-assessment process. The current self-assessment reflects the requirements of the *Common Inspection Framework*. The quality improvement development plan sets challenging targets, most of which are being met within the planned timescale. The organisation is fully committed to continuous improvement through self-assessment. There are several examples of new systems being revised after analysis and evaluation.

34. There is systematic monitoring of learners' progress. The management information system collects data on the achievement of NVQ units including dates, methods of assessment, names of assessors and verification. The dates of all work-based reviews are logged. This allows the college to track progress towards achievement and highlights those learners whose progress is slow, so that improvement strategies can be carried out. Assessors and reviewers are issued with action lists that ensure all key processes take place at the appropriate time and date. In advance of learners' attendance at the college, staff are issued with management information on NVQ achievement and other key events, in order that quality assurance checks can take place. Internal verification dates are recorded and reports produced which ensure the process is applied for all learners, all assessors and across all units of the NVQ.

35. The college has introduced good arrangements for the collection of employer and learner feedback. Employers are required to return a monthly record on learner participation in training. Every month the college seeks employers' views on a single aspect of the training programme. By asking one question a month in a format that gives a good response rate, the college is able to identify areas in need

of improvement. The results are analysed and tabled as appropriate. In one case, it was identified that employers' awareness of accident reporting was lower than anticipated and, as a consequence, the college provided guidance information on the matter. The area for investigation each month is chosen by the training co-ordinators' group, having in mind the current aspect of quality assurance improvements. A questionnaire has been developed to collect learners' views on different aspects of their training. The results of these are analysed and used to introduce quality assurance improvements. Comments from learners, collected informally during periodic reviews, are fed into the training co-ordinators' group and form the basis of other improvements, such as the role of the workplace mentor and modes of attendance for off-the-job training.

36. A comprehensive range of quality assurance systems and procedures has been devised. These cover all aspects of training and assessment, as well as other features of the college's business. Staff have a good knowledge of these procedures and have been involved with internal audits to check appropriateness and compliance. One master copy is maintained and documents are well controlled. Staff can get personal copies of these procedures through a staff intranet. However, these quality assurance systems and procedures are too new for their effects to be evaluated.

37. There is weak quality assurance of on-the-job training. Learners benefit from a good range of opportunities to develop skills and competence at work. In some cases this is well organised and well structured, but with other employers it is much less structured. The college has no established mechanisms to check the quality of on-the-job training. It does not make formal observations of workplace training and give feedback to mentors and trainers so that they can improve their performance. It does not check that on-the-job training fully matches the requirements of the NVQ. The commercial pressures of the industry mean that the sharing of good practice across the wide range of yards used by the college is not encouraged. There are plans to be more selective in the matching of learners to those yards that offer the best experience in terms of mentoring and structured on-the-job training.