

INSPECTION REPORT

Kent Equine Industry Training Services Limited

08 January 2002



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and in New Deal options. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

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

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

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 **learn**direct 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.

Inadequate provision

A provider's provision will normally be deemed to be less than adequate where

- one third or more of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas and New Deal options are judged less than satisfactory, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. The overall judgement as to whether the provision is adequate or inadequate is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Kent Equine Industry Training Services Limited is a private training provider with two training centres in the southeast of England. Its head office is near Gillingham, in Kent. It provides work-based learning programmes in horse care, and subcontracts training for veterinary nursing and work-based learning programmes in small animal care, to two specialist colleges.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the work-based learning programmes are good and the leadership and management are also good.

GRADES

Leadership and management	2
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	2
Quality assurance	3

Land-based provision	2
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	2

KEY STRENGTHS

- clear strategic development
- particularly good internal and external communications
- thorough assessment practices
- good involvement by employers in training programme
- good practical and theory training
- effective use of short-term targets during progress reviews

KEY WEAKNESSES

- inadequate monitoring of retention and achievement rates

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- full implementation of revised quality assurance procedures
- further development of key skills training

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of four inspectors spent a total of 15 days at Kent Equine Industry Training Services Limited (KEITS) in January 2002. They visited 20 workplaces and interviewed 48 learners, 19 workplace supervisors and carried out 21 interviews with KEITS's staff. They observed progress reviews, assessments and training sessions. They also examined a range of documents including learners' portfolios of evidence and records, progress review documents, assessment records, external verifier's reports, minutes of meetings, plans, policies, contracts and procedures. The current self-assessment report was produced in October 2001.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Land-based provision	2	4	4	1	0	0	0	11
Total	2	4	4	1	0	0	0	11

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. KEITS was established in 1997 to develop and provide good work-based learning programmes for the equine industry in Kent. In January 1999, a KEITS director developed a second company, Hertfordshire Equine Industry Training Services Limited (HEITS), which traded separately until March 2000. In April 2000, both companies amalgamated under the main company name, Kent Equine Industry Training Services Limited, and three new staff were appointed to support the development of the business. In April 2001, the company decided to market all of its provision under the name KEITS. In 1999, KEITS expanded its provision to include small animal care and veterinary nursing. All the training for learners on work-based learning programmes in horse care is carried out on the job. Student veterinary nurses and some learners on small animal care training programmes attend off-the-job training, which is subcontracted to two specialist colleges. KEITS employs 16 staff. It has a managing director, a director of finance and two operational directors. There is an office and administration manager in Kent and a part-time administrator in Hertfordshire. There are also two business development consultants who are also assessors and internal verifiers, an operations co-ordinator, and a quality assurance manager. KEITS also uses a consultant health and safety officer, a training and development lead body consultant and three part-time assessors.

3. There are currently 172 learners, who are all employed. There are 97 advanced modern apprentices, 60 foundation modern apprentices and 15 learners on other work-based learning programmes. The training is funded by the Learning and Skill Councils (LSCs) at Hertfordshire and Kent and Medway. Kent and Hertfordshire have a number of large towns and numerous villages. The main employment sectors are manufacturing, communications, pharmaceuticals, retailing and business services, high-tech engineering, construction and tourism industries. Both counties have rural areas with poor public transport and a declining population. The unemployment rates in Hertfordshire and Kent in September 2001 were 2.8 per cent and 2.2 per cent respectively, compared with the national average of 2.9 per cent. In 2001, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above in Hertfordshire and Kent was 56.3 per cent and 52.4 per cent respectively, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. The proportion of people from minority ethnic groups in Hertfordshire and Kent is 4 per cent and 1.9 per cent respectively, compared with the national average of 6.2 per cent.

Work-based learning for young people

4. Achievement rates are poor but are improving. The achievement rate for advanced modern apprentices working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 2 has improved from 38 per cent for 1997-98 to 83 per cent for 1999-2000. The achievement rate for level 3 NVQs is also improving. Retention rates are improving and are currently at 81 per cent for advanced modern apprentices and 73 per cent for foundation modern apprentices. Forty-three per cent of learners in other work-based learning programmes achieved their individual learning plans. The retention rate for the current year is 100 per cent.

5. There is good practical and theory training. Employers are involved in action-planning and progress reviews and the on-the-job training is well planned. Assessors are involved at the planning stage of the training programme so that the learners are fully prepared for assessment. Gaps in the training are identified and visiting assessors provide the extra training. Visiting assessors provide effective support for work-based assessors and learners. Assessment practices are thorough. Detailed records of learners' assessments are kept and there is comprehensive monitoring of learners' progress towards the completion of their qualification. All staff are appropriately qualified and work effectively as a team. Learners are well motivated and enjoy their training. Resources for on-the-job training are good. There is a wide variety of work placements and learners are able to gain additional work experience at other work placements.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 2

6. KEITS is owned and managed by two directors. One director is responsible for contracts and staffing and the other for the finance and management of the Hertfordshire training centre. There are two operations directors. One, based in Hertfordshire, is responsible for equal opportunities and health and safety, the other, based in Kent, is responsible for marketing. Assessment and internal verification are monitored by an internal verifier co-ordinator. A part-time quality assurance manager is responsible for other aspects of quality assurance. Two full-time and three part-time staff carry out assessment, internal verification, progress reviews and recruitment. Three part-time assessors carry out additional assessment. There are 21 work-based assessors who also carry out assessment. A full-time office manager, based in Kent, and a part-time administrator, based in Hertfordshire, provide administrative support. Two colleges are subcontracted to provide off-the-job training in veterinary nursing and animal care training. They also carry out the assessment of three learners in animal care. The company has an equal opportunities policy, which was updated in October 2001, and complaints, grievance and harassment procedures. The quality assurance framework and procedures, are updated annually. Self-assessment has been carried out since 1998 and the most recent self-assessment report was produced in October 2001.

STRENGTHS

- clear strategic development
- particularly good internal and external communications
- well-established and effective arrangements for staff appraisal and development
- good use of equal opportunities data
- continuous improvement of equal opportunities policy and procedures
- comprehensive quality assurance arrangements

WEAKNESSES

- inadequate monitoring of retention and achievement rates
- insufficient reinforcement of learners' awareness of equal opportunities

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- full implementation of revised quality assurance procedures
- closer links between self-assessment and business plan
- further promotion of programmes to under-represented groups

7. The company has a clear strategy for development as a specialist training provider for the equine and animal care industries, a strength acknowledged in the self-assessment report. The strategy is closely linked to an annual business plan. The business plan

contains a comprehensive review of previous business plans and clearly sets out business development activities for the current year. All staff are fully involved in the planning process. Targets for the company are set by all staff and agreed with directors. Staff responsible for leading the implementation of each part of the plan are identified. Progress towards the plan is monitored routinely at team meetings. All staff have well defined roles and responsibilities which cover all aspects of the training provision.

8. There are particularly good internal and external communications. There are monthly all-staff meetings at each training centre. There is a standard agenda for the meetings, which includes reviews of learners' progress, health and safety, equal opportunities and a wide range of other operational issues. The meetings are well attended. The assessors based at each training centre also meet each month. Every two months all staff meet to discuss a wide range of issues, including quality assurance. Staff use these meetings to keep up to date with developments which directly affect them and the learners. Managers and staff keep in regular close contact with each other across both training centres. Staff support each other effectively and work particularly well together as a team. Effective communication with employers and learners takes place through the frequent assessment and progress review visits. Assessors are easily contacted by telephone and e-mail.

9. There are well-established and effective arrangements for staff appraisal and development, a strength acknowledged in the self-assessment report. There are thorough induction arrangements for new staff. After three months, all new staff meet individually with a director to review the progress and set targets. All staff have an annual appraisal with one of the directors. The appraisal process includes self-evaluation and the identification of individual learning needs. The company organises an extensive training programme to cater for the needs of all its staff, which includes technical updating, assessment and teacher training. Team meetings are used effectively to promote staff development by dealing with equal opportunities issues and informing staff about changes to the training programmes. Two-day residential meetings held twice a year are also used to update staff. The residential meeting in November 2001 included promoting greater involvement of employers in training and key skills and basic skills support. Team-building is also an important part of these development days.

10. There is inadequate monitoring of achievement and retention rates. Performance against targets is monitored thoroughly every month and the findings are reviewed at team meetings. A detailed analysis of performance in the current contract year included an examination of early leavers and NVQ achievement rates. The company does not set targets for retention and achievement rates. The monitoring of company performance does not include the systematic review of retention rates or achievement of apprenticeship frameworks, by particular groups of learners.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

11. The company makes good use of equal opportunities data. Information including learners' gender, ethnic background and additional learning and social needs are reported to all staff each month. Trends in the recruitment of under-represented groups, including men, learners from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with disabilities, have been identified. The company has worked well to obtain data with which to compare its performance. It has identified a relatively high level of recruitment for learners with a disability, and low levels of recruitment for men and learners from minority ethnic backgrounds. Although a strategy to improve recruitment from these categories has been discussed, it has not yet been implemented.

12. The company regularly reviews and updates its equal opportunities policy and procedures. A member of staff is responsible for equal opportunities. There is also a clear statement on equal opportunities and procedures which are reviewed annually by a director. There are effective complaints, grievance and harassment procedures, a strength acknowledged in the self-assessment report. Any issues are quickly identified and resolved. The company's commitment to equal opportunities is stated clearly on agreements with learners, employers and subcontractors, and on the home page of the website. A comprehensive action plan for equal opportunities has been produced. This is being implemented and progress towards it is reviewed at staff meetings every two months.

13. There is insufficient reinforcement of learners' understanding of equal opportunities issues. Learners receive a thorough introduction to equal opportunities issues during induction, but their understanding is not reinforced throughout the training programme. Equal opportunities issues are checked during progress reviews but not in sufficient detail. The training strategy for equal opportunities depends on staff being able to identify issues for the learners at review meetings, rather than the learners being expected to recognise issues for themselves.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 3**

14. There are comprehensive quality assurance arrangements. All aspects of the company's work is monitored at the staff meetings held every two months. All staff provide a detailed report of their work and any issues they have identified. There is effective sharing of good practice. Staff help each other to resolve difficulties. Progress in relation to contract targets, the business plan and the action plan from the self-assessment report is also reviewed at these meetings. The company carries out annual surveys of the views of learners and employers with relevant, well-constructed questions. Responses are analysed and a detailed report is produced and circulated to all staff. Prompt action is taken to remedy any identified weaknesses. The self-assessment process is reviewed annually. Employers' and learners' files are audited every three months to ensure all paperwork is complete and accurate. The work of subcontractors is also effectively monitored. Contracts are drawn up to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each party, and are audited to ensure compliance.

15. A service specification, which was updated recently, outlines all the company's policies and procedures. It contains a quality assurance cycle, which identifies when each policy and procedure is due to be reviewed throughout the year. Documents are being standardised across the company and a document control system and style guide have been introduced. The service specification is under development and is not yet fully implemented across the whole company.

16. There is systematic, thorough internal verification on all training programmes. There is an internal verification co-ordinator. Standard internal verification procedures exist across all training programmes and detailed verification plans are followed. Assessors and internal verifiers at each centre meet the co-ordinator every month. Assessors are observed frequently and given clear feedback. Trainee assessors are provided with effective support and are working towards the training and development units of their qualification. Assessment and verification issues are discussed by all staff at the staff meetings held every two months. Workplace assessors are closely monitored and well supported by the co-ordinator. Meetings are organised for workplace assessors to inform them about current developments and to share good practice. Learners' work is internally verified through assessors' observations of practical tasks. Internal verifiers do not sample learners' work throughout the training programme.

17. The managing director, in consultation with all the staff, produced the comprehensive self-assessment report. It includes a detailed action plan, which is monitored at the staff meetings held every two months. The action plan is reviewed and updated quarterly. There are insufficient links between the self-assessment report and the business plan. The company did not identify poor achievement rates for apprenticeship frameworks as a weakness, and did not clearly identify action to rectify the poor retention rates.

Good Practice

There are detailed written working arrangements which accompany the subcontract agreement with a college for training learners on work-based learning programmes in animal care. These detail the responsibilities of the college and the company for carrying out assessment and monitoring learners' progress in the workplace.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Land-based provision

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	171	2

18. There are 156 modern apprentices working towards NVQ at levels 1, 2 and 3 in horse care. There are 59 foundation apprentices, 97 advanced modern apprentices and 15 learners on other work-based learning programmes. Most training and assessment takes place in the workplace. Veterinary nursing learners attend block or day-release training at specialist colleges or have the option of following supported distance learning courses. They are required to pass nationally recognised veterinary college examinations as well as their NVQ at levels 2 and 3. The company has 63 work placements throughout Hertfordshire and Kent, all of which are approved for NVQ assessment. There are 21 work-based assessors, 10 visiting assessors, 12 trainee assessors and six internal verifiers. All KEITS's staff are occupationally competent and hold appropriate assessor awards. All learners are employed and are usually recruited directly from employers. Induction is carried out in the workplace. One member of staff has overall responsibility for basic skills development. Key skills are assessed by means of written tasks and one key skills assessor marks all learner projects across the company. All learners have progress reviews at least monthly, at which action plans are completed.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started					25		44		62	
Still in training					1	4	13	30	45	73
FMA framework completed					11	44	6	14	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed					14	56	9	20	2	3
Left without completing the framework					13	52	25	57	17	27

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started	34		67		69		120		42	
Still in training	0	0	0	0	5	7	58	48	34	81
AMA framework completed	7	21	18	27	12	17	7	6	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed	13	38	48	72	57	83	64	53	6	14
NVQ level 3 completed	7	21	23	34	23	33	10	8	0	0
Left without completing the framework	27	79	51	76	52	75	55	46	8	19

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started							14		20	
Still in training							2	14	13	65
Individual learning plan completed							6	43	7	35
Left without completing individual learning plan							6	43	0	0
NVQ level 1 completed							0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed							6	43	6	30
NVQ level 3 completed							0	0	1	5

STRENGTHS

- thorough assessment practices
- good involvement by employers in training programme
- good on-the-job training resources
- thorough monitoring of health and safety
- effective use of short-term targets during progress review
- good practical and theory training

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention and achievement rates
- poor initial guidance for advanced modern apprentices

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- increased and consistent use of accreditation of prior learning
- continued development of training for key skills
- more sampling of learners' work by the internal verifier
- development of strategies to improve retention

19. There are thorough assessment practices. Assessment documents are comprehensive, clear and are used effectively. Assessors have good working relationships with the learners. Assessors meet regularly to discuss learners' progress and share good practice. Most learners understand when elements and units of their NVQ or key skills have been achieved. Learners are well aware of their progress towards achieving their NVQ or key skills and of their target dates for completion. Assessment is carried out mainly by observation, questioning and the completion of written tests. Learners' portfolios contain a good range of evidence. Assessors provide clearly written feedback. At one yard, some activities were recorded on video but this had not been identified as appropriate evidence. Visiting assessors meet with learners at least monthly and more often if necessary. They provide excellent learner support. Assessment is arranged and carried out as and when required and allows assessments to fit in with the yard, kennels or veterinary surgery routine. Learners who are taking part in competitions are visited at the venue by their assessor. The assessor observes their performance and keeps a record as evidence for the appropriate NVQ units. Although accreditation of prior learning is used to fast-track some learners through their NVQ, the accreditation of prior learning varies widely across the training programmes. There is a written accreditation of prior learning policy, which was developed with the advice of the external verifier. Some learners benefit from a fast-track system, but others make slow progress, often repeating what they have already learned.

20. There is good involvement of employers in the training programme. Employers are fully involved in the support and training of the learner. They take part in the progress reviews and contribute to target-setting. They also help plan learners' work to assist learning and assessment. There are good working relationships between staff and employers. Learners are able to gain additional work experience by using other work placements.

21. On-the-job training resources are good. The wide range of work placements ensures that learners have access to a good variety of work activities. The training provider monitors the facilities and resources at every work placement. A new work placement was funded to buy the equipment needed to provide the training programme. Many employers encourage learners to compete at local shows in showjumping and dressage. This helps learners develop their confidence and technique and achieve the NVQ riding option. Training provider staff help learners find horses to compete on if they are unable to do so through their employer. There are horses appropriate for all abilities. One learner, identified as requiring additional jumping

tuition, was given lessons at a neighbouring work placement to develop the necessary skills. Practical lessons are taught by well-qualified and experienced staff. KEITS maintains a library of books and videos available for all learners to borrow.

22. The company carries out careful health and safety checks before accepting a work placement. Each work placement is inspected twice a year. Health and safety are explained well at induction. There is a well-written health and safety induction pack, which is continually revised and improved in line with current legislation. It provides advice and information on basic health and safety practice related to riding and working with horses. Employers are provided with effective support and resources to enable them to comply with the health and safety regulations.

23. Staff make effective use of short-term target-setting to monitor learners' progress during progress reviews. Learners are allowed to choose which element they wish to work towards and set their own targets. Their progress is recorded on progress review documents. Good target-setting help learners make good progress and reinforce the skills they learn throughout the training programme. Assessors take copies of all previous progress reviews, to each visit, so that all targets set can be reviewed.

24. There is good practical and theory training. Some learners have 10 hours of formal training each week, with most learners receiving a minimum of six hours formal training each week. Training is carried out by well-qualified staff, visiting trainers and assessors. They quickly identify if there are weaknesses in the on-the-job training and arrange additional learning support. Learners' progress reviews, completed by visiting trainers, identify action points for employers to help them provide effective learner support. The training provider is currently implementing a plan to include minimum training requirements in employers' contracts. Where employers are unable to provide this minimum standard the training provider provides the additional training at the employers' premises. All learners have their key skills assessed at the beginning of their training programmes. Action plans have identified particular weaknesses in the key skills training programme, which are now being rectified. The key skills workbook produced by the training provider's staff, is vocationally relevant. Learners seek advice from their assessor if difficulties arise. A member of staff is now responsible for the development of basic skills support.

25. Achievement and retention rates are poor for modern apprentices. Between 1999 and 2000, only 17 per cent of the advanced modern apprentices and 44 per cent of the foundation modern apprentices achieved the full apprenticeship framework. Forty-three per cent of learners on other work-based learning programmes achieved their individual learning plans. Achievement of the NVQ at level 2 by advanced modern apprentices, has improved from 38 per cent in 1997-98 to 83 per cent in 1999-2000. Poor retention rates were acknowledged in the self-assessment report and the training provider is implementing measures to remedy this weakness. Retention rates have improved for advanced modern apprentices from 21 per cent in 1997-98 to 81 per cent in the current year. Retention rates have also improved for foundation modern apprentices from 43 per cent in 2000-01 to 73 per cent in the current year. The current retention rate for

learners on other work-based learning programmes is 100 per cent.

26. Poor initial guidance is given to advanced modern apprentices. The framework is not explained to them thoroughly and carefully at recruitment. Many learners do not understand the work involved in achieving the advanced modern apprenticeship. Most are not shown the level 3 NVQ standards at interview or during induction. Learners are not prepared for the transition from level 2 to level 3. A riding assessment, carried out by visiting assessors at recruitment, has been recently introduced. One assessment, however, did not include jumping. One visiting assessor rarely carries out the riding assessment until a month after the learner has been recruited on to the advanced modern apprenticeship training programme. Many learners who would be better suited to the foundation modern apprenticeship are recruited as advanced modern apprentices, a weakness identified in the self-assessment report. The training provider no longer recruits large numbers of advanced modern apprentices, compared with foundation modern apprentices. In 2000-01, 120 advanced modern apprentices and 44 foundation modern apprentices were recruited. In 2001-02, only 42 advanced modern apprentices and 62 foundation modern apprentices were recruited.

Good Practice

During one training session, an older horse finished the lesson early and was walked while others completed a final exercise. This helps learners' understand the care of older horses and underlines the importance of horse welfare. The trainer is careful to promote an understanding of good horsemanship during the lessons.