

INSPECTION REPORT

Harrogate Training Services

02 December 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 Jobcentre Plus programmes. 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
- **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

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.

Overall judgement

In those cases where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

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

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Harrogate Training Services is a private company with premises in the centre of Harrogate. It offers training for young people in business administration, early years care and education, information technology and retailing. Learners work towards foundation modern apprenticeships, advanced modern apprenticeships and national vocational qualifications (NVQs). At the time of the inspection, the numbers of learners in information technology and retailing were low. Therefore, these areas of learning were not inspected.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Leadership and management, and quality assurance are satisfactory, and equality of opportunity is good. Training in business administration, and early years care and education is satisfactory.

GRADES

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

Business administration, management & professional	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

Health, social care & public services	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- good use of feedback to make improvements
- good promotion of equal opportunities
- good assessment in the workplace
- thorough progress reviews

KEY WEAKNESSES

- gaps in procedures to assure quality
- slow progress by some learners
- insufficiently structured off-the-job training in early years care and education

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- accreditation of all units
- thorough standardisation of internal verification and assessment
- more encouragement for employers to release learners for off-the-job training

THE INSPECTION

1. Five inspectors spent a total of 20 days with Harrogate Training Services (HTS) in December 2002. They interviewed 28 learners and carried out 19 interviews with HTS's staff. Fourteen workplace managers and supervisors were interviewed and 17 work placements were visited. Inspectors observed assessments and progress reviews in the workplace and observed and graded two learning sessions. They examined the organisation's policies and procedures, minutes of meetings, staff records, data, and learners' portfolios and individual learning plans. Inspectors also studied HTS's most recent self-assessment report, produced in February 2002.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Business administration, management & professional	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Health, social care & public services	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. HTS was part of Harrogate Borough Council until 1992, when it was bought out by management. About three-quarters of its income comes from a contract with North Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC). It also carries out private training for individuals and companies and provides training for pupils at a local school who cannot attend school or are not making good progress there. HTS employs 7 staff. A self-employed person works for HTS for two days each week. HTS's premises in the centre of Harrogate include offices, training and interview rooms, and a computer suite. HTS provides work-based learning for young people in business administration, health and social care (early years care and education), retailing and customer service, and information and communications technology (ICT). The training leads to NVQs and foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships. There are 32 learners in business administration and 45 in early years care and education. Most of the learners are employed.

3. HTS serves Harrogate, Ripon, Knaresborough, Wetherby, Leeds and the surrounding areas. The unemployment rate in Harrogate and Ripon stood at 1.2 per cent in May 2002, compared with the national average of 3 per cent. The unemployment rate for those aged between 18 and 24 was 17.4 per cent in Harrogate and Ripon in April 2002, compared with 25.7 per cent nationally. The level of deprivation in Harrogate is ranked 301 out of 354 districts. The area is characterised by rural market towns, and employment is mainly within the service sector. In 2001, 68 per cent of pupils achieved five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. The proportion of residents from minority ethnic groups in Harrogate is 0.9 per cent, compared with a national average of 6.2 per cent.

Work-based learning for young people

4. Work-based learning for young people is satisfactory. In business administration, there is good assessment by observation. This is well recorded and fully involves the learner. Learners have good progress reviews, in which their progress is well recorded. However, some learners make slow progress, and inductions at the training centre are ineffective. In early years care and education, assessment in the workplace is good and well recorded and takes place frequently. Training is well organised and is arranged to meet the needs of learners and employers. Progress reviews are thorough and well recorded. However, off-the-job training is insufficiently structured and learners' evidence relies too much on written answers to questions.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

5. HTS employs a training manager, a manager, an early years co-ordinator, two assessors, one trainee assessor and administrator, and one junior administrator. It also hires a self-employed contractor for two days each week. HTS treats the contractor exactly the same as other staff, providing an induction and a staff handbook, appraisals and training. A consultant visits the work placements of learners in early years care and education once a year and reports on health and safety, and other matters. HTS has an equal opportunities policy, and policies and procedures to assure quality. It has carried out self-assessment each year since 1998.

STRENGTHS

- effective internal communication
- good links with agencies that provide expert support for learners
- good promotion of equal opportunities
- good use of feedback to make improvements

WEAKNESSES

- ineffective use of data
- lack of qualifications and experience by some staff
- gaps in procedures to assure quality

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- accreditation of all units
- copying of assessment records to learners
- thorough standardisation of internal verification and assessment
- marking of action plan with date it was last updated

6. Communication within HTS is effective. All the staff work from the same offices and speak frequently. An open style of management contributes to a constant flow of information. Discussions between the staff and the manager take place throughout each day. Information, including the action plans arising from self-assessment, is displayed on office walls. Staff, including those who work part time, feel involved and can contribute ideas. All staff meet twice each month. These meetings are minuted and the minutes circulated. HTS identified good communication as a strength in its self-assessment report.

7. Communication with other organisations are satisfactory. HTS is in frequent contact with the awarding bodies and the local LSC. A manager from HTS attends meetings of local training providers. These training providers hold yearly events that the local

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member of parliament attends to present certificates to young achievers. HTS has visited four local schools this year to give them information on work-based learning programmes. HTS has good links with employers and work-placement providers. It uses many of these continually for different learners.

8. The management and planning of on-the-job training is satisfactory. Inspectors identified some weaknesses in the management of off-the-job training. However, HTS does deal effectively with problems in off-the-job training. For example, when a number of learners were behaving badly, it suspended the training sessions, informed the employers, and recorded the details. HTS is now negotiating to agree a suitable way for each learner to restart off-the-job training.

9. HTS has good links with agencies which can support learners, such as a drugs advice agency, the probation service, a carer support group and a charity that helps homeless people. It contacts expert agencies to arrange support when learners need it. This helps some learners to stay on their training programmes. HTS identified good support for learners as a strength in its self-assessment report.

10. HTS does not use data effectively to manage and assure the quality of some aspects of its learning programmes. It has two databases which contain a considerable quantity of information. These are regularly updated and information can be produced at any time. HTS uses the data to find out when learners' progress reviews are due and when units were assessed. However, it does not always use the data to take strategic decisions. The business plan includes targets to increase achievement and retention rates, but no specific targets to improve the organisation's services. HTS uses the data mainly to monitor performance against the contract with the local LSC. Some data about learners are issued to staff regularly. Staff monitor learners' progress against their length of time in training. However, inspectors found that some learners are making slow progress towards their qualifications. Of the learners who started training between 1998-99 and 2001-02, 51 per cent stayed in training longer than planned. HTS identified insufficient use of data as a weakness in its self-assessment report.

11. HTS does not arrange for all individual units to be accredited. This means some learners who leave early do not have their units accredited. It also means that learners who stay in training do not have the motivation of achieving units. Learners do not receive copies of their assessment records.

12. Some staff are not suitably qualified or experienced. Approximately 28 per cent of learners have additional learning or social needs, but no member of staff has a suitable qualification in helping these learners. Some training staff do not have any teaching or training qualifications. Some staff who teach early years care and education lack up-to-date occupational experience. The self-assessment report identified failure to update the occupational and academic competence of staff as a weakness. HTS has a thorough staff appraisal system, which has resulted in an analysis of staff training needs. All staff are currently developing their skills in NVQ training, key skills training, equal opportunities, and health and safety. There have been several staff changes. Of the

seven staff, one started on the first day of the inspection and another was due to start on the following week, although the member who was due to start had already spent some time with HTS before being offered employment. Another member of staff had worked for HTS for just three months. The self-employed assessor and trainer has been with HTS for two months. In the past, HTS has found it difficult to recruit qualified and experienced staff. The company is putting together a list of self-employed assessors it can use when it needs them.

13. Internal verification is satisfactory. However, there is no thorough system for ensuring that assessment and internal verification are carried out consistently. Assessors of early years care and education, including work-based assessors, used to meet. However, few assessors attended and no meetings have taken place recently. HTS's training manager attended a course run by the awarding body on standardisation in September 2002. As a result, the training manager is arranging for staff to observe one another carrying out assessments. After the observations, all staff will discuss the results and ensure that they are interpreting the standards consistently. So far one observation has been carried out, in early years care and education, and the results have been discussed with the assessor.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

14. Overall responsibility for equality of opportunity rests with one of the partners. HTS promotes equal opportunities well. Learners are informed and questioned about equal opportunities at their initial interviews and their understanding is checked at progress reviews. Learners attend a workshop on equality of opportunity, where various methods are used to reinforce their knowledge and understanding. Learners have a good understanding of equality of opportunity. Staff recently attended a workshop on equality of opportunity, which was well planned and taught. Staff have a thorough understanding of equality of opportunity and are committed to promoting it. Further staff training is planned. HTS sends employers a toolkit on equality of opportunity and a detailed questionnaire about their policies and procedures. Equality of opportunity is promoted well within the training centre. The equal opportunities policy is displayed on the main notice board and the notice board in the training room. The harassment policy is displayed on the main notice board, together with statements and leaflets on equal opportunities. The main notice board also displays posters on equal opportunities designed by learners. HTS promotes its learning programmes at local schools in a way that encourages pupils from under-represented groups. For example, it uses learners from under-represented groups as role models. Learners with additional social needs are supported by effective one-to-one communication. HTS regularly reviews and updates its equal opportunities policy.

15. HTS carries out some analysis of data on learners' gender, ethnicity and disabilities. It has identified a gender imbalance on its learning programmes and has strategies to remedy this, including using school visits to challenge gender stereotyping.

16. The recruitment of staff is satisfactory. Most advertising material indicates that HTS is an equal opportunities employer. However, there are unequal numbers of male and female staff. HTS arranges work placements at its own premises which help learners from under-represented groups to learn in their chosen field. HTS accepts and supports some young people with serious difficulties. It continues to support learners who do not complete their training on schedule, to help them gain their qualifications.

17. HTS's main site is on the second floor and can be reached by staircase only. HTS has recognised this problem and tried to minimise any difficulties it causes. If necessary, it can hold initial interviews at a nearby Connexions office, which is fully accessible. Information for prospective learners tells them about this arrangement. HTS holds a list of employers who can meet the needs of learners with mobility or other difficulties. If learners would find it difficult to attend off-the-job training at HTS's premises, HTS can arrange for them to receive all their training at work. HTS identifies and purchases special resources for learners who need them. Sometimes learners can continue to use these after they finish their training.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 3**

18. HTS has policies and procedures to ensure consistency and assure quality. The training manager has overall responsibility for quality assurance and is the lead internal verifier. Internal verification and assessment are well planned and monitored. External verifiers' reports have been positive about all the areas of learning. Although staff attempt to ensure consistency in assessment and internal verification, their efforts are not recorded and there is no structure of meetings to ensure consistency.

19. HTS has used feedback to make important improvements. It asks learners to fill in questionnaires, both during their training and when they leave. These include questionnaires about their off-the-job training. HTS also encourages learners to fill in feedback slips and pin them to the main notice board. Staff write responses on the slips and return them to the notice board for everyone to see. Good use of feedback from learners was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. The training manager analyses all the feedback and has used it to make improvements. For example, learners' feedback led HTS to update its computer hardware and software and to introduce broadband Internet access. HTS has also improved the layout of the training rooms and started to offer subsidised refreshments. HTS also gathers feedback from employers and has obtained and shared useful information. As a result of the feedback, HTS set up a forum for employers to discuss the effects of the minimum wage. HTS also gains feedback from staff. Recently, this has led to equal opportunities training for staff. It has also led to changes in where staff work within HTS's office. These have made the premises more accessible for learners and given staff better access to information about learners.

20. HTS has procedures to assure quality, as well as office procedures and instructions. All staff are aware of the procedures, many of which are displayed on notice boards in the training centre. However, there are some gaps in the quality assurance system. There are no procedures for observing off-the-job training or evaluating staff training. HTS carries out internal audits. However, it has no procedures for deciding how often to audit each area or to identify actions to be taken as a result of the audits. HTS has set up a group to discuss quality issues, but has no accompanying policies and procedures. Policies, instructions and procedures are not compiled in a systematic way. This makes it difficult for staff to refer to them. Comprehensive data are available, but are not being analysed systematically to identify ways of developing the organisation. The lack of analysis of data was identified as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

21. HTS has carried out self-assessment each year since 1998. It produced its most recent self-assessment report in February 2002. All staff were involved in self-assessment and feedback from learners was also considered. Staff were asked to consider their own areas of learning and leadership and management, equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The training manager then produced a draft report. The most recent report was useful to inspectors. Inspectors agreed with all the grades in the self-assessment report. HTS has produced a comprehensive action plan and staff are responsible for ensuring that its goals are achieved. The action plan is discussed at staff meetings and

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displayed on the staff notice board. The training manager reviews the action plan regularly and updates it every six months. The action plan is not marked with the date it was last updated.

Good Practice

Staff induction takes place over two to three months. During this time, new staff shadow an experienced member of staff. Each new member of staff has a mentor to offer guidance and support. New staff receive ongoing feedback.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Business administration, management & professional

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	32	3

22. HTS provides training in administration at its training centre in Harrogate. There are 18 advanced modern apprentices and 12 foundation modern apprentices and two learners are working towards NVQs. Most learners are recruited through Connexions or personal contact. HTS interviews all learners before they start their training, but it admits all who apply. If new learners are not employed HTS helps them to find a suitable work placement. HTS carries out an initial assessment of learners' administrative skills, as well as their basic and key skills. Learners work in a wide variety of businesses in the Harrogate area and receive an induction at these workplaces. HTS's staff visit learners every eight weeks to review their progress together with the employer. Many learners attend off-the-job training every two weeks. This takes place in HTS's newly re-equipped centre. The timing and frequency of off-the-job training are decided when the learner's individual learning plan is drawn up and agreed with the employer.

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	2		17		8		7		5							
Retained*	1		14		3		4	57	4	80						
Successfully completed	0		0		1		3	43	4	80						
Still in learning	1		14		3		0	0	0	0						

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	4		12		7		14									
Retained*	4		11	92	6	86	14	100								
Successfully completed	0		1	8	3	43	5	36								
Still in learning	4		1	8	3	43	4	29								

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2002-03		1999-2000		1998-99											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	2		4		14											
Retained*	2		2	50	9	64										
Successfully completed	0		3	75	4	29										
Still in learning	2		0	100	0	0										

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- good assessment
- good progress reviews

WEAKNESSES

- slow progress by some learners
- ineffective induction at the training centre

23. Assessment is good. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. Assessments take place in the workplace. These are planned together with the learner. Various methods are used, including effective questioning and observation. Assessments are well recorded and evidence is cross-referenced to all the relevant NVQ and key skills units. Assessors also assess written evidence accurately. All evidence is included in learners' assessment files. All the evidence is authenticated before being assessed. Learners are fully involved in identifying the NVQ and key skills requirements their evidence meets and receive clear feedback after each assessment. Learners know

about the awarding body's appeals procedures. Work in learners' portfolios is satisfactory. After each assessment, the assessor prepares a plan showing what work the learner needs to complete. Learners are visited at least every eight weeks, but many are visited more often. This depends on their individual circumstances and the timetables of their off-the-job training. Learners discuss their choice of optional units with their assessors, who provide professional guidance.

24. HTS reviews learners' progress, including the work they have done, the skills they have gained and the training they have received in the workplace. Progress reviews are also used to discuss equal opportunities, health and safety, and any personal difficulties. Learners record this themselves. A clear record is made of progress towards the NVQ and short-term, achievable targets are set. Employers play a full role in progress reviews and are encouraged to record both positive and negative comments. The forms used to record progress reviews are well laid out, making it easy to see how much progress the learner has made. Good progress reviews were identified as a strength in the self-assessment report.

25. Some learners are making slow progress towards their qualifications. Some have had several assessments, but have not produced the further evidence they need to finish elements. Others are waiting for work to be signed off. Most learners have had at least two assessors. Several have had as many as four assessors. This has led to repetition and different requirements being made by different staff. Time has been lost while learners waited for assessors to be replaced. Some learners do not understand all the requirements of their NVQs and learners' understanding of some aspects of key skills is poor. Many learners attend off-the-job training every two weeks. These training days lack structure. Learners spend most of their time answering questions on background knowledge and writing statements. Staff provide little training. However, learners receive one-to-one advice and support. Although learners make slow progress, rates of achievement are satisfactory. HTS recognised the slow progress made by some learners as a weakness in its self-assessment report.

26. The induction which learners receive at the training centre is ineffective. Most learners remember very little of the information given. There is insufficient emphasis on health and safety or equality of opportunity before learners start at their workplaces. Learners who do not attend off-the-job training sometimes fail to understand important aspects of these issues. Some learners have a poor understanding of their training courses and many are unsure of the key skills requirements.

Good Practice

Key skills are taught well during learning sessions. Work done during classes on equal opportunities and health and safety is used as evidence towards the key skills awards.

Health, social care & public services**Grade 3**

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	45	3

27. In early years care and education, there are 16 foundation modern apprentices, 18 advanced modern apprentices and 11 learners working towards NVQs. Learners can start their training at any time of the year. Some learners apply directly to HTS, while others are referred by their employers or by Connexions. All learners are interviewed and tested on entry. This is used to assess their numeracy, literacy, key skills and occupational skills. Fifty-eight per cent of learners have additional learning or social needs. They receive extra support from their trainer and assessor. HTS works with day nurseries to provide work placements for learners. Forty-three learners out of 45 are employed. All learners receive an induction from HTS and a separate induction from their employer. HTS carries out a health and safety audit of learners' workplaces when they start their training. Assessment is carried out in the workplace either by HTS's early years care and education co-ordinator or by work-based assessors. The early years care and education co-ordinator also carries out off-the-job training and progress reviews. Six of the 11 nurseries have work-based assessors. All learners are encouraged to attend off-the-job training, which takes place in the training centre on half or one day each fortnight. However, many are unable to attend because of work commitments. These learners receive training in the workplace, either individually or in small groups. Learners attend workshops at HTS for training in the key skills of IT and application of number. Assessment of key skills takes place mainly in the workplace. Some learners receive additional training, provided by a childcare development partnership, through their nurseries. The early years care and education co-ordinator reviews learners' progress every eight to 10 weeks.

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

Work-based learning for young people																
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	4		13		7		5									
Retained*	0		11	85	6	86	3	60								
Successfully completed	0		0	0	4	57	2	40								
Still in learning	4		11	85	2	29	1	20								

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	4		11		7											
Retained*	0		4	36	4	57										
Successfully completed	0		1	9	1	14										
Still in learning	4		9	82	3	43										

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

Work-based learning for young people																
NVQ Training																
	2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-2000		1998-99							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	6		5		3		8		11							
Retained*	0		5	100	2	67	3	38	5	45						
Successfully completed	0		0	0	1	33	3	38	5	45						
Still in learning	5		5	100	1	33	0	0	0	0						

*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

STRENGTHS

- good assessment in the workplace
- flexible training to meet learners' and employers' needs
- thorough progress review

WEAKNESSES

- insufficiently structured off-the-job training
- too much reliance on written questions in portfolios

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more up-to-date resources
- more thorough inductions
- more encouragement for employers to release learners for off-the-job training

28. Retention and achievement rates are satisfactory. However, some learners make slow progress, as the self-assessment report identified.

29. Assessment in the workplace is good. This was identified as a strength in the self-assessment report. Assessors observe learners often and record their observations in detail. Many nurseries have work-based assessors, who receive good support from HTS's early-years care and education co-ordinator. She ensures that the assessors use the correct procedures and paperwork. If the assessors are struggling to fit in assessments because of pressures of work, the early years care and education co-ordinator carries out some observations for them. This enables the learner to continue to make progress. In nurseries with no work-based assessor, the early years care and education co-ordinator carries out all the assessment. Assessments are planned in detail and the plans are given to learners' workplace supervisors so that they know what activities learners need to carry out. Workplace supervisors write detailed witness testimonies. They are assisted in this by a clear form from HTS. The form includes checklists of the NVQ standards, to be ticked off when the learner is competent, and a section for a detailed statement. Workplace supervisors also use the forms to ensure that learners have opportunities to gain all the skills necessary for each unit. Employers receive details of all the NVQ and key skills standards. However, some learners are writing their own records of assessment and witness testimonies, which are then checked and signed by their assessor or supervisor. This is not appropriate for less experienced learners and those who are not working alongside a work-based assessor. Some statements written by learners are recorded as witness testimony rather than as statements by the learners themselves.

30. HTS arranges off-the-job training to suit learners and employers. About half the learners attend fortnightly workshops at HTS's training centre. The others receive one-to-one support from the early years care and education co-ordinator during her visits to their nurseries. The co-ordinator keeps employers well informed about the training requirements. She responds quickly to requests for help from learners and employers. For one employer, who owns five nurseries, she runs fortnightly training sessions at one of the nurseries. Many learners also attend courses provided in their nurseries by a local childcare development partnership. Attendance on these courses is recorded during progress reviews. However, it is not recorded on learners' individual learning plans, although a new format introduced in July 2002 would allow for this.

31. Progress reviews are very thorough. This strength was identified in the self-assessment report. Progress reviews take place every eight to 10 weeks. The early years care and education co-ordinator has a detailed discussion with the learner and the workplace supervisor, before completing a detailed record. She asks questions about on-the-job training, for example health and safety or equal opportunities training, and any extra courses. She sets demanding targets and fills in a chart that clearly shows progress made towards the NVQ. Some progress reviews are attended by both the learner and the workplace supervisor. However, some workplace supervisors cannot attend because it would mean leaving the nursery with too few staff.

32. Off-the-job training is insufficiently structured. Learners spend most of the training sessions working through sets of questions on their own, with effective support from the tutor. Learners do discuss topics together and share ideas during the training sessions, but this is not organised by HTS. Lesson plans show that parts of some sessions are used for the tutor to give guidance about particular units. However, learners do not have a timetable showing which units will be covered at each session. There are no structured teaching sessions where important areas, such as child development, managing behaviour, first aid and child protection, are taught in detail. Learners who do not attend the learning sessions have no other opportunity to share ideas and take part in group discussions.

33. In gathering evidence, learners rely too much on answers to written questions. They are rarely encouraged to produce evidence of how they have planned and evaluated activities or observed children. Records of observations and witness testimonies are kept separately from other evidence. This means learners lack a clear picture of their evidence towards each unit as a whole. Learners who could use work-based evidence of their competence are still required to answer the written questions. Some of the questions are repetitive and some are difficult for learners to understand.

34. Learners are encouraged to buy a suitable textbook. A few copies are available at the training centre. Most learners rely heavily on this one book. Other suitable books and resources are available, but some of these need updating. Some important recent government publications, such as curriculum guidance and new standards for childcare, are not available for learners at the training centre. Learners who do not attend off-the-job training at the training centre have little access to resources. The early-years care and education co-ordinator takes some resources with her when she visits learners, but these are limited. HTS has recently bought new computers, including laptops that can be taken out to nurseries, so that learners can use the Internet.

35. Learners' inductions are insufficiently thorough. The early years co-ordinator gives all learners a short induction to their learning programme. This is usually done individually, as learners start their training at different times. As part of the induction, learners work on an assignment that checks their understanding of health and safety, equal opportunities and the NVQ. The co-ordinator tells learners about the appeals procedure and reinforces this information during assessments and progress reviews. Learners also attend a session on equal opportunities, which makes effective use of a video, a training pack and role play to raise their awareness. Learners who cannot attend the session work through the training pack with the co-ordinator. However, this training takes place later during the learning programme. Learners also have an induction from their nursery as soon as they start work. This covers the nursery's policies and procedures.

HARROGATE TRAINING SERVICES

36. Some employers are unwilling to release employed learners for training because it would leave their nurseries with too few staff. Although these learners receive good support in the workplace, they lack opportunities to broaden their experience by sharing ideas with other learners.