

REINSPECTION REPORT

Stubbing Court Training Limited Reinspection

22 October 2003



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. 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 **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- learning and job preparation programmes 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.

SUMMARY

The provider

Stubbing Court Training Limited is a private training company near Chesterfield in Derbyshire. It was founded in 1982. It offers work-based learning in horse care for 47 learners. Of the work-based learners, 14 are advanced modern apprentices, 23 are foundation modern apprentices and eight are taking national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in horse care at level 2 and horse care and management at level 3. A further two learners are in Entry to Employment and are taking NVQs at level 1. All the learning is funded by Derbyshire Learning and Skills Council.

Stubbing Court Training Limited employs six staff. It has a chief executive, who is also the company secretary, and an internal verifier, who is chair of the company. It also employs an office manager and two other full-time staff, who have various responsibilities, including training and assessment. A part-time member of staff is employed as a receptionist. Stubbing Court Training Limited hires a further seven individuals to provide training and assessment. Six of these provide both training and assessment and one provides assessment only. There is one trainee assessor. Off-the-job training is provided at the company's premises near Chesterfield and in five other training rooms in workplaces throughout Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. Additional learning support for literacy and numeracy is subcontracted to a further education college and provided in the workplace.

Overall judgement

At the previous inspection in December 2001, work-based learning in horse care, leadership and management and quality assurance were unsatisfactory. Equality of opportunity was good. At the end of the reinspection process, all aspects of the provision were found to be good or better.

Grades awarded

	Inspection	Reinspection
Leadership and management	4	1
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity	2	1
Quality assurance	4	2

	Inspection	Reinspection
Land-based provision	4	2
Contributory grades:		
Work-based learning for young people	4	2

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During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following key strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

KEY STRENGTHS

- effective strategies to improve retention and achievement rates
- good external links and partnerships
- good training and development for staff and employers
- good promotion of horse care training to under-represented groups
- comprehensive arrangements to assure quality
- good opportunities for learners to gain a variety of experience

KEY WEAKNESSES

- no key weaknesses identified

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further improvement of retention and achievement rates
- further development of literacy and numeracy strategy
- more involvement of staff and employers in self-assessment
- better communication between employers and visiting trainers and assessors

THE REINSPECTION

1. Two inspectors spent 10 days at Stubbing Court Training Limited (SCT) during February, June, July and October 2003. They carried out 37 interviews with learners and 18 interviews with staff. They made 24 visits to the company's premises and learners' workplaces. Inspectors interviewed four external partners and 11 employers. They examined a range of documents, including 17 portfolios of evidence, individual learning plans and records of assessment and internal verification. They reviewed development and action plans, policies and procedures and reports from the awarding bodies. They also studied the most recent self-assessment report and the draft version of an updated report, which was produced in October 2003.

Grades awarded to learning sessions at the original inspection

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

Grades awarded to learning sessions at reinspection

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

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 1

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

STRENGTHS

- effective strategies to improve retention and achievement rates
- good external links and partnerships
- wide range of effective communication methods
- good training and development for staff and employers
- clear equal opportunities policy and procedures
- good promotion of horse care training to under-represented groups
- comprehensive arrangements to assure quality
- effective use of feedback to achieve continuous improvement

WEAKNESSES

- no significant weaknesses identified

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- further development of literacy and numeracy strategy
- clearer requirements for reporting by subcontractor
- better recording of observation of on-the-job training
- more involvement of staff and employers in self-assessment

2. SCT has a range of strategies for improving retention and achievement rates. It has set clear targets, which have been met or exceeded. All assessors and learners are set clear targets and their performance is monitored. Retention and achievement rates have risen steadily since the previous inspection. The company has introduced a wide range of initiatives. For example, it uses work experience to make sure that learners choose a suitable training programme, and fewer learners now leave early. Learners who leave early are promptly contacted. Learners who need help with literacy or numeracy are given additional support. The teaching of background knowledge has improved. Learners are motivated by a range of rewards for good progress. Learners who particularly improve their performance are offered a work placement in a top eventing yard.

3. SCT continues to have good partnerships and links with other organisations. The chief executive has led the development of a national initiative involving skills competitions to highlight skills used in the equine industry. The company invites well-known personalities in the equine industry to lead masterclasses. This motivates learners and employers. SCT has good arrangements with a further education college. These

have improved teaching, learning and additional support. The company now carries out planned observations of learning sessions. It also arranges sessions for trainers and employers to share good practice in teaching and learning. The company has carried out effective consultation as part of a national initiative to raise standards of literacy and numeracy and has used the results to guide its strategy for additional support.

4. Although SCT has taken some effective action to meet learners' needs for additional support, its overall strategy for additional support is at an early stage. The company has prepared an outline of its strategy, with clear flowcharts for the processes involved in providing additional support, and it has identified many areas for improvement. However, its plans to put the strategy into practice are at an early stage and have insufficient detail. For example, there is little detail about accreditation and further staff development.

5. SCT uses a wide range of effective communication methods. Regular face-to-face contact between staff establishes good, responsive working relationships. Employers regularly receive information about important changes to training as well as broader issues, such as changes in legislation that affect them. Trainers and assessors receive frequent bulletins on good practice and summaries of external verifiers' reports. The company produces a regular newsletter for staff, learners and employers. This is eye-catching, lively and easy to read. It welcomes new learners, reports on learners' successes and achievements and provides information about developments in the equine industry. Learners make good contributions to the newsletter and these are rewarded. SCT has recently produced its first quality assurance report, to share information about quality assurance matters. However, the report is targeted too widely. Its readership ranges from learners to directors. The language and presentation of information are not suitable for all readers.

6. SCT provides good training and development for staff and employers. It has a thorough system of staff appraisals, which take place every three months. The company organises a wide range of staff training events. These have included training in the core curriculum and training in assisting learners who need help with literacy and numeracy. Many staff have recently achieved relevant qualifications. The company develops employers' understanding of important issues affecting learning. For example, it has recently provided training about different learning styles and training to raise awareness of literacy and numeracy. One employer helps learners with spelling and writing in the workplace. The company has helped many employers to achieve qualifications, such as qualifications in health and safety and first aid. SCT's masterclass series is open to employers. This gives employers the opportunity to practise advanced riding skills. Learners enjoy the experience of learning together with their employers. All SCT's staff and all the trainers and assessors it hires have clear developmental goals. However, the goals set for the hired trainers and assessors are not explicitly linked to the company's strategic goals.

7. SCT has a clear and detailed agreement with the subcontracted college of further education. This sets out the obligations of each party. However, the college's

responsibilities for producing reports as part of a yearly review of its contract are unclear. For example, the college produced a written report on one aspect of its services at the end of the first year of the contract, but it did not report on a second aspect. The draft contract for the current academic year requires a written report on only one aspect of the college's work.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 1

8. SCT has maintained all the strengths identified at the previous inspection. The company's clear equal opportunities policy and procedures are now effectively reinforced at induction and during training. New posters promoting equality of opportunity are clearly displayed in every yard. The company's agreement with employers requires them to promote equality of opportunity at work. The company carries out regular checks to ensure that this is happening. Learners and employers are provided with clear written information about equality of opportunity. Learners understand their rights and responsibilities. SCT continues to train staff and employers in equality of opportunity to ensure that they meet individual learners' needs. For example, recent training about the needs of people with hearing impairments and about specific learning difficulties has resulted in good support for individual learners.

9. SCT continues to promote its training to under-represented groups. All the company's publicity contains images of under-represented groups. The company uses a range of events to attract under-represented groups. For example, it provides taster training events in inner-city areas. It also makes presentations at local schools and provides information for pupils to develop an awareness of employment opportunities for young people. The company leads a national initiative to highlight the skills used in the equine industry. This provides practical experience for people who have not come into close contact with horses before and helps them to overcome any fears. Selected learners are given financial support to gain work experience at a top eventing yard. This helps them to gain confidence. SCT provides work experience for young people to help them decide whether the vocational area is right for them before they choose a training programme. SCT now monitors participation by different groups and sets demanding targets to increase the proportion of learners from under-represented groups. In 2001-02 and 2002-03, the company exceeded its targets for participation by gender, disability and ethnicity. Since the previous inspection, SCT has introduced a record book for collecting examples of its own good practice in equality of opportunity.

Quality assurance**Contributory grade 2**

10. Since the previous inspection, SCT has developed thorough arrangements to assure quality. It has a detailed quality assurance policy and thorough procedures for training and other processes. The company follows a yearly schedule of internal audits of its main processes. This has resulted in actions that are beginning to achieve continuous improvement. The company now reviews and updates its procedures each year. It has a clear system for ensuring that staff are using up-to-date paperwork. All staff and employers have a copy of the quality assurance manual and understand how it applies to their work. Staff follow the quality assurance procedures consistently. Each separate procedure is illustrated with clear flowcharts. However, the manual is unclear about how the different procedures are linked.

11. SCT now subcontracts a teaching specialist to carry out regular observations of off-the-job training. Trainers receive detailed and constructive feedback. The company's chief executive has now started to observe on-the-job training provided by employers. The records of observations of on-the-job training are insufficiently thorough. Employers receive verbal feedback and areas for development are recorded. However, the records do not set out plans for further observation to ensure that improvements are made.

12. SCT makes good use of feedback to achieve continuous improvement. It has a system for collecting feedback on individual learning sessions and special events. It also sends yearly questionnaires to learners, employers and staff. It carries out a detailed analysis of the results. The findings are well presented and reported and are used to achieve continuous improvement. Feedback is reported to staff in various ways, including through newsletters. The company has provided extra resources as a result of feedback from learners. Learners now all have their own copy of the sector skills council's workbook. SCT is beginning to compare the results of feedback from year to year. The company has made good use of feedback from learners in its self-assessment report and its recently produced quality assurance report.

13. Self-assessment has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory overall. The self-assessment report is clearer and more critical than the previous one. It makes good use of learners' feedback and a wide range of other evidence. The current draft report makes more effective use of data than the previous report and identifies some trends. SCT carries out regular and detailed action-planning. Many of the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors were identified in the self-assessment report. Most of the grades in the self-assessment report were accurate. However, staff and employers are not sufficiently involved in self-assessment and are not adequately consulted about the report.

14. Assessment and internal verification are satisfactory. The company now follows its internal verification policy fully. It carries out formative and summative internal verification. Learners' progress towards their qualifications is monitored regularly. There are regular meetings to ensure consistency between assessors. These are carefully planned and recorded. Assessors are assigned to risk bands and inexperienced assessors are observed more frequently. The internal verifier gives detailed feedback to the

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assessors and uses future visits to monitor their success in putting right any problems. External verifiers' reports have praised recent improvements.

Good Practice

Learners, trainers and employers have the opportunity to take part in masterclasses at which top riders teach riding skills and related background knowledge. Learners are motivated by this opportunity and greatly improve their riding techniques after the classes. They enjoy the experience of learning together with their employers. Learners' parents are invited to attend as observers and to meet the trainers and employers who work with their children. This promotes good relationships between all involved.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Land-based provision

Grade 2

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	47	2

During the reinspection process, the inspection team identified the following strengths, weaknesses and other improvements needed:

STRENGTHS

- effective teaching and learning
- good access to training
- effective support for learners with additional learning needs
- good opportunities for learners to gain a variety of experience

WEAKNESSES

- insufficient understanding of the role of the portfolio

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- higher rates of achievement following from current improvement in retention rates
- better communication between employers and visiting trainers and assessors

15. Teaching and learning is effective. Since the previous inspection, SCT has introduced well-structured off-the-job training. Level 2 learners attend learning sessions every second week. Level 3 learners attend sessions every fourth week. Five of the seven sessions observed by inspectors were better than satisfactory. All learners receive a detailed schedule, which gives the dates and location of their learning sessions. A clear scheme of work lists the subjects to be covered in each session. The topics covered tie in closely with the requirements of learners' NVQs and key skills qualifications. Learners enjoy the sessions and develop their skills and understanding. Trainers make the learning sessions interesting by using a range of teaching methods. For example, they use a suitable computer programme to explain the anatomy of the horse. The programme helps learners to develop a good understanding of the horse's skeletal frame, internal organs and general anatomy. Every session now has a teaching plan. Many of these are detailed. However, a few are poor and list subject headings only.

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16. Learners find it easy to attend off-the-job training. Training is provided at six different venues. All the venues have good facilities. All trainers are also employers who provide off-the-job training. Training rooms are located near the stable yards. This makes it easy to link background knowledge with practical tasks. SCT helps learners who are finding it difficult to travel to their training sessions. One training room is cramped. In this training room, furniture is not arranged to make the best use of the space available and encourage participation.

17. SCT provides good support for learners with additional learning needs. Learners have a thorough induction, during which their individual needs are identified. Learners receive extra help with literacy, numeracy and key skills in between off-the-job training sessions. A well-qualified tutor provides support to individual learners and small groups of learners in scheduled learning sessions. Learners make good progress. Learning materials are relevant to horse care. SCT is about to begin a project to develop further resources that are vocationally relevant. Learners understand the importance of key skills and literacy and numeracy in the workplace. Learning sessions are stimulating and fun.

18. Learners have a wide variety of opportunities to learn. They are employed in well-run yards. These include riding schools, livery stables, show centres and competition yards. Learners take part in extra activities enthusiastically, often in their own time. These include extra riding lessons, clear-round show jumping and cross-country practice. SCT has organised a series of masterclasses, which are led by an internationally renowned trainer. These classes are open to trainers, employers and learners. Employers nominate learners for places in the classes. All employers, learners and trainers are encouraged to watch the sessions and attend a session in related background knowledge. The classes give learners an incentive to make progress. As well as taking part, learners learn by watching their trainers and employers being taught. Learners are proud to take part and often invite their parents to watch. Learners have good opportunities to take optional units of the NVQ that are not commonly offered. These include units in trekking, riding, caring for performance horses and breeding. Learners work in a variety of yards that suit their individual needs. Learners can swap yards to gain extra experience.

19. Retention and achievement rates have steadily improved since the previous inspection and are now satisfactory. Of the learners who started foundation modern apprenticeships in 2001-02, 53 per cent have completed the apprenticeship framework and none are still in training. Of the learners who started advanced modern apprenticeships in the same period, 50 per cent have completed the framework and a further 33 per cent are still in training. Of the learners who started training towards NVQs in the same period, 50 per cent have achieved an NVQ and 10 per cent are still in training. Learners are making faster progress. Of the learners who started a foundation modern apprenticeship in 2002-03, 18 per cent have already completed their apprenticeship framework and a further 77 per cent are still in training. Of the learners who started training towards NVQs in 2002-03, 33 per cent have completed their NVQ and a further 44 per cent are still in training. All the learners who started an advanced

modern apprenticeship in 2002-03 are still in training. All the learners who have started training during 2003-04 are still in training. Some learners who are still in training have nearly completed their training programmes. Almost all learners who complete their programme achieve their qualifications, these good retention rates could lead to outstanding achievement rates. Learners can take extra qualifications. Almost all learners have achieved a basic health and safety and first aid certificate. Learners are proud of their achievements and many display their certificates at the front of their portfolios. SCT emphasises learners' achievements in its bimonthly newsletter and gives an award to a trainee of the year. Two awards were presented at a recent masterclass in recognition of exceptional commitment and progress.

20. After each off-the-job training session, every learner receives a plan with details of what they need to do before the next session. Most of the tasks involve practising skills and research activities. Each learner is given a detailed checklist of the skills they must develop at work. This ensures that learners meet the requirements of the NVO units they are working towards at work and enables assessors to plan assessments. Employers do not always pass information about learners' experience and progress to their trainers or assessors. Some learners' checklists have not been completed and these learners have been given unsuitable assessments and training sessions. For example, some learners have attended training on topics that they already understood well. Others have taken assessments that they were not ready for.

21. Learners are proud of their portfolios. They contain a wide range of photographs, diagrams and pictures used for learning and assessment. Employers and trainers frequently help learners to develop their portfolios. However, there is some confusion about the role of the portfolio in assessment. Many portfolios contain both photographic evidence and written judgements by the assessor. However, some of the photographs used for assessment were not clearly referenced to the qualification. Assessors record assessments in detail but they do not always record what each element of a unit covers. Records of observations of learners' practical skills are stored separately in the portfolios. Assessors record feedback on failed assessments on an action plan, which gives details of the work needed to reach the required standard. However, this sometimes fails to explain the reason for failure fully.