

REINSPECTION REPORT

Heathercroft Training Services Limited Reinspection

04 February 2004



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 learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning 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.

REINSPECTION REPORT

Heathercroft Training Services Limited Reinspection

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REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Heathercroft Training Services Limited (HTS) is a private training company situated in Eastbourne, East Sussex. It was established in 1991 to pilot training in national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in care. Most learners are on foundation and advanced modern apprenticeships in care, although a few are on customer service and management programmes. Training is funded by Sussex, Kent and Medway and London South Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs). HTS also provides care training for privately funded learners, which was not within the scope of this reinspection.
2. The management team consists of a general manager and a deputy to the general manager, who is also one of two operations co-ordinators and oversees the training in the Sussex region. The post of a second co-ordinator for Kent and London South regions is currently vacant. HTS employs a development co-ordinator for the care programme, who is also the equality of opportunity representative. Its key skills co-ordinator also oversees human resources in relation to staff training and development and is the health and safety representative. The strategic direction of the company is overseen by a board of two directors and the general manager.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Health, social care & public services

3. HTS currently has 368 learners following care programmes: 177 as advanced modern apprentices and 183 as foundation modern apprentices. Four further learners are working towards NVQs in care at level 2, and four at level 3. Eight per cent of learners are men.
4. All learners are employed and receive training in the workplace. HTS delivers all learning support, portfolio-building and key skills training and assessment in the workplace. Learners with additional learning needs receive individual coaching in literacy and numeracy skills in the workplace. Most assessment is carried out by HTS's assessors, although some work-based assessors contribute to the process. HTS's staff visit the learners in their workplaces approximately every four weeks to plan and carry out assessments of work practice.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	15
Number of learner interviews	30
Number of staff interviews	27
Number of employer interviews	10

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

5. At the previous inspection of February 2002, HTS's leadership and management were found to be unsatisfactory. Its arrangements for quality assurance and the quality of its provision in care were unsatisfactory. Its approach to equality of opportunity was satisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process, all aspects of the provision were found to be satisfactory.

GRADES

Grades awarded at previous inspection

grade 1= outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak

Leadership and management	4
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	4
Health, social care & public services	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

Grades awarded at reinspection

grade 1= outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak

Leadership and management	3
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	3
Health, social care & public services	3
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	3

KEY FINDINGS

Achievement and standards

6. Those learners who have started the programme more recently are making satisfactory progress. Of the learners seen, more than half are making steady progress towards achievement of the NVQ. Evidence in learners' portfolios indicates that the rate of unit achievement has improved. The overall standard of learners' work is satisfactory.

7. Although HTS has now made a number of changes to the management of the care programme, these new arrangements have not yet had sufficient effect on achievement rates. **The framework completion rate remains poor and is not yet improving.** For example, of the 2001-02 intake of advanced modern apprentices, 76 per cent left the programme, 17 per cent achieved an NVQ and only 5 per cent completed the full framework.

Quality of education and training

8. Training is satisfactory. All five lessons observed were satisfactory or better. In the good sessions, tutors showed good understanding and in-depth knowledge of the NVQ and key skills qualification units. Training is planned and delivered in a manner that encourages and supports learners. Learning is not always checked during training sessions. Many learners are encouraged to collect evidence from a wide range of sources, but there is some over-reliance on written work. Learners are enthusiastic about their learning.

9. **Communication between tutor/assessors and employers is good.** Information is effectively shared and employers provide good, practical, comprehensive inductions into workplace procedures. Most workplaces provide very good resources. Employers are now more involved in the progress review process and have a good understanding of the NVQ programme. HTS responds quickly and effectively to employers' concerns.

10. **Learning materials to support NVQ and key skills units and technical certificates are good.** Learners find these materials helpful, and their written work provides clear evidence of the good use they make of them. HTS's learning materials are written in clear language and are more accessible to learners than textbook materials.

11. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. Learners are now being placed on an appropriate level of NVQ. All learners' literacy and numeracy skills are assessed during their induction programme. Where additional learning needs are identified, tutors plan and deliver extra support sessions. Tutor/assessors are aware of individual learning needs and deliver training sessions to meet these needs. Assessment is regular and most learners receive constructive feedback.

12. **Action-planning is inadequate.** Learners' progress is reviewed every four to six weeks. Knowledge of health and safety and of equality of opportunity is recorded and checked. While reviews are frequent, progression towards all learning goals is not routinely monitored or discussed. Many action plans contain insufficient detail and short-term targets.

13. New staff receive good support, including shadowing experienced tutor/assessors for at least four weeks.

Leadership and management

14. **HTS now collects and uses data much more effectively in its management planning.** It collates and analyses information on learners' progress. Data on achievement rates are used in management and team meetings to set targets for steady improvement. Tutors produce and use a monthly list of learners' progress review dates to plan visits to learners. Comparative data are now produced to evaluate learners' performance regionally.

15. **Staff development is good.** HTS is committed to providing staff with training which is clearly linked to the company's strategic objectives as well as the learners' training needs. Annual training audits produce related training plans. All training staff hold or are working towards assessors' qualifications and level 3 key skills qualifications. Most tutors are currently enrolled on a two-year certificate in education course. Problems with appropriate training in the delivery of literacy, numeracy and language skills support have now been resolved.

16. **Communications in the company continue to be effective.** Lines of communication are clear throughout HTS. The schedule of regular team meetings is carefully planned and well established. HTS has a clear cycle of planning and review for strategic and business planning. Communications with employers are also effective and include direct telephone contact, tutor visits, HTS's newsletters and responses to questionnaires. HTS negotiates signed training agreements and partnership agreements with all employers.

17. HTS pays careful attention to the health and safety of learners in work placements. Set-up procedures for new employers include a comprehensive health and safety check. HTS effectively monitors the continuing health and safety of learners throughout their programmes.

18. Key skills training and assessment are now integrated with care programmes. More learners are now working through their key skills qualification programme at an earlier stage in their programme. However, some learners, who have been on programme for a longer period, are not.

19. Arrangements for literacy and numeracy support are satisfactory. HTS has actively sought a solution to the literacy and numeracy support needs of learners. All training staff have received training in literacy and numeracy skills support. HTS uses appropriate

diagnostic tests to identify learners' support needs.

20. **HTS has no coherent strategies to improve retention rates.** New strategies to improve retention and achievement rates are not yet fully affecting learners. HTS does not perform enough analysis of why learners are leaving programmes early. Development plans and targets concentrate more on raising achievement rates than retention rates.

21. **HTS promotes equality of opportunity well.** Its equal opportunities policy is clearly written and contains references to current legislation. Information on new legislation is shared with all staff. All learners and staff receive training in equal opportunities awareness and the company's appeals and grievance procedures during induction. Learners demonstrate an understanding of equality issues, which is checked and reinforced during progress reviews. HTS promotes the caring profession well to male learners who are generally under-represented in the sector. All company policies and procedures are currently being reviewed and updated to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

22. HTS collects a range of data on gender, disability and minority ethnic participation rates and analyses it in relation to retention and achievement rates. **However, it does not perform enough comparative analysis to identify trends, or to help management in setting targets to enrol under-represented groups.**

23. HTS has developed its quality assurance procedures since the previous inspection. It now has a clear quality assurance policy. Most of its written procedures and policies have been updated and contain review dates.

24. **HTS has a good system to collect regular feedback from learners, employers and staff.** Responses are analysed by management and results shared with staff. HTS takes and records actions where problems are identified. Feedback analysis is discussed with all staff and a summary of the most recent analysis is included in HTS's newsletter, along with actions taken.

25. HTS has an established system of staff observations to evaluate the standard of learners' training. HTS has also introduced systems to monitor the standards of work-based assessors. Most learners are reviewed and assessed by HTS's staff.

26. HTS's self-assessment process is satisfactory and involves all staff. It produced its most recent self-assessment report in April 2003, and made some initial amendments in September 2003. HTS is now more aware of its own strengths and weaknesses. However, inspectors found some of the areas identified as strengths were no more than normal practice.

27. HTS's internal verification arrangements have improved since the previous inspection and are now satisfactory. Internal verifiers regularly observe assessments and check portfolios of evidence. Most staff have appropriate assessor qualifications. Learners' portfolios are sampled monthly. Standardisation meetings are now established

for internal verifiers to share issues and good practice.

28. HTS performs insufficient monitoring of quality assurance from the learners' perspective. HTS has no internal audit system; it has produced a set of proformas, but has not yet implemented them. HTS has not identified that some short-term target-setting in learners' progress is inadequate, or that some inconsistencies exist in the provision of support for learners. Some, but not all, assessment planning individually focuses on learners' needs and the workplace setting. The road map, a standard planning tool developed by HTS, is not being used consistently by all tutor/assessors.

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good use of management information for target-setting
- good staff development
- effective communications
- good promotion of equality of opportunity
- effective use of feedback from learners, employers and staff

Weaknesses

- no coherent strategy to improve retention rates
- insufficient comparison of data to identify equality of opportunity issues
- insufficient monitoring of quality assurance from learners' perspective

Health, social care & public services

Strengths

- good learning materials
- effective links with employers

Weaknesses

- slow progress towards framework completion for some learners
- inadequate action-planning

DETAILED REINSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- good use of management information for target-setting
- good staff development
- effective communications
- good promotion of equality of opportunity
- effective use of feedback from learners, employers and staff

Weaknesses

- no coherent strategy to improve retention rates
- insufficient comparison of data to identify equality of opportunity issues
- insufficient monitoring of quality assurance from learners' perspective

29. HTS has formed a new management team since the previous inspection. The team has been involved in establishing the strategic direction and an associated development plan to rectify the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report.

30. HTS now collects and uses data much more effectively in its management planning. Since introducing a new management information system, HTS now collates information on learners and their progress. Retention and achievement rate data are used in management and team meetings and for setting targets. HTS is aware of retention and achievement rates over time and has set realistic targets for a steady improvement. Significant improvements in progression and achievement rates are not yet apparent, but the progress of learners due to complete them over the next few months appears to suggest a rise in achievement rates. A monthly list of learners' progress review dates is produced and used by tutors to plan visits to learners. Comparative data are now produced to evaluate learners' performance between the three LSC regions in which HTS operates.

31. HTS is committed to training its staff. This is clearly linked to the company's strategic objectives and the training needs of learners. The company carries out annual training audits and produces related training plans. All training staff hold or, are working towards, assessors' qualifications and level 3 key skills qualifications. Most tutors are currently enrolled on a two-year certificate in education course which commits them to attending a further education college for one morning each week. HTS has resolved the problems it had with providing appropriate training for its staff in the delivery of literacy, numeracy and language skills support. HTS has been selected as one of three training

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providers in Sussex to deliver literacy, numeracy and language training, which will also enable it to access further funds for staff training.

32. Communications in the company continue to be effective. Lines of communication are clear throughout HTS. The schedule of team meetings is carefully planned and well established. HTS holds regular team and management meetings, with agendas and formal minutes. All meetings: board, management, team, administration and standardisation, contain standing agenda items to ensure consistent discussion across the organisation. Meetings are used effectively to share information and targets. HTS has a clear cycle of planning and review for both the strategic and business planning. Its business plan now contains targets to improve the company's quality assurance standards. Communication with employers is also effective, including direct telephone contact, tutor visits, HTS's newsletters and responses to questionnaires. HTS negotiates signed training agreements and partnership agreements with all employers.

33. Careful attention is paid to the health and safety of learners in work placements. Set-up procedures for new employers include a comprehensive health and safety check, which effectively monitors the continuing health and safety of learners throughout their programmes.

34. HTS has now introduced a procedure for the integration of key skills training and assessment in care programmes. More learners are now working through their key skills qualification at an earlier stage in their overall programme. However, some learners who have been on programme for a longer period have still not completed their key skills qualification.

35. HTS has actively sought a solution to learners' literacy and numeracy support needs. All training staff have received training from a specialist provider in the delivery and support of literacy and numeracy training. HTS uses an appropriate diagnostic test to identify learners' support needs.

36. HTS does not have coherent strategies to improve retention rates. HTS has improved initial assessments, integrated key skills training and assessment with vocational training, and concentrated on developing staff members' skills. However, these strategies have not yet affected the rate at which learners are leaving the programme early or completing their frameworks. HTS does not perform enough analysis of why learners leave programmes early. Its development plans and targets concentrate more on raising achievement rates than retention rates. Its attempts to find leavers' reasons for leaving programmes, such as sending out exit questionnaires, have not provided useful information. HTS acknowledges that this problem still needs to be resolved by the management. Managers and staff are aware of the need to improve the rate of retention and progress and are making changes and improvements, but no effect is yet evident.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

37. HTS's updated and detailed equal opportunities policy is clearly written and contains appropriate references to current legislation. Information on new legislation, including

the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, is disseminated to all HTS staff and placed in a central file for easy reference. All learners and staff receive training in equality awareness and appeals and the company's grievance procedures during induction. HTS produces a regular newsletter for employers and their staff and learners. The latest newsletter contains an article entitled 'come on the lads' which aims to promote the caring profession to men, who are generally under-represented in this sector. HTS is currently analysing and updating all of its policies and procedures to ensure they comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. A number of policies have been amended and are going through the company's approval process before being adopted.

38. Learners demonstrate an understanding of equality of opportunity issues. All learners receive equality of opportunity awareness training during induction, which is then checked and reinforced during progress reviews. HTS has identified and produced a set of equality of opportunity topics for tutors to discuss with learners during review meetings over the coming 12 months.

39. HTS collects a range of data on learners' gender, disability and minority ethnic background and analyses it in relation to retention and achievement rates. HTS uses the data to compare regional trends, such as starts, and retention and achievement rates from Sussex, London South and Kent and Medway LSC regions. However, it does not conduct enough comparative analysis to identify trends or to assist management in setting targets to enrol under-represented groups. For example, HTS does not compare the rates at which learners from different minority ethnic groups complete the programme, or leave it early.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

40. HTS has developed its quality assurance procedures since the previous inspection. It has a clear quality assurance policy. Most of its written procedures and policies are now updated and contain review dates.

41. HTS has a good system to collect regular feedback from learners, employers and staff. Responses are analysed by management and used to guide staff. Actions to resolve problems are taken and recorded. Feedback responses were discussed with all staff during the most recent annual programme review, and a summary of the findings recorded in the latest HTS newsletter along with actions taken.

42. HTS has an established system of staff observations to evaluate the standard of learners' training, which it links to staff members' appraisal, training and development. HTS has also introduced a system to monitor the standards of work-based assessors. Most work-based assessors are involved with privately funded learners and only a small number of LSC-funded learners are assessed by work-based assessors. Most learners are reviewed and assessed by HTS's staff.

43. HTS's self-assessment process is satisfactory and involves all staff. It produced its most recent report in April 2003, making some initial amendments in September 2003. HTS is now more aware of its own strengths and weaknesses. However, inspectors

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found some of the strengths identified in the report were no more than normal practice.

44. HTS's internal verification arrangements are satisfactory, and have improved since the previous inspection. Internal verifiers regularly observe assessments and check portfolios of evidence to make sure assessments are fair and accurate. Most staff members have appropriate assessor qualifications. Learners' portfolios are sampled monthly. HTS has established standardisation meetings for internal verifiers to share concerns and good practice. A process is now in place that thoroughly monitors and ensures all training materials developed in-house are of a set standard and shared with all training staff. HTS has established a formal annual programme review of the care training.

45. HTS has identified the need for an internal audit procedure, and has recently produced a set of proformas. However, it has not yet implemented them. HTS has not identified that some short-term target-setting in learners' progress reviews is inadequate. Some inconsistencies exist in the provision of support for learners. Some feedback on written work is constructive and informative, but some contains insufficient advice to assist learners to improve. Some, but not all, assessment planning is individually focused on learners' need and the setting they work in. HTS has devised a standard planning tool, which it calls a road map. While some trainers are adapting it to meet individual learning needs, others are not.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Health, social care & public services

Grade 3

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	368	3

During the reinspection process, the inspectors identified the following strengths and weaknesses:

Strengths

- good learning materials
- effective links with employers

Weaknesses

- slow progress towards framework completion for some learners
- inadequate action-planning

Achievement and standards

46. Those learners who have started the programme more recently are making satisfactory progress. More than half of the learners interviewed are making steady progress towards achievement of the NVQ. Evidence in learners' portfolios indicates that the rate of unit achievement has improved. For those longer-established learners, progress is still slow. Some learners have reached their expected completion date with only one NVQ unit achieved and no key skills unit achievement.

47. Retention rates have decreased over the past few years. At the previous inspection in February 2002, 30 per cent of learners who started programmes in 2000-01 had already left with no achievement. Current figures show that 41 per cent of the advanced modern apprentices who started in 2000-01 were retained, 25 per cent achieved an NVQ but only 3 per cent completed the framework. The framework completion rate remains poor. For example, of the advanced modern apprentices who started in 2001-02, 76 per cent left the programme without achieving a qualification, 17 per cent achieved an NVQ and only 5 per cent completed the framework. However, the new measures now in place are considered as improvements by learners and employers. Assessors visit more regularly and key skills training and assessment are now integrated in the NVQ programme. HTS makes supporting learners' literacy and numeracy needs a priority, and provides them with additional support if required.

48. The overall standard of learners' competences in their work placements is satisfactory. Attendance at the key skills qualification external tests has improved since the introduction of testing in the workplace. HTS identified that many learners found it daunting to attend external tests and so took the decision to administer key skills testing

in the learners' workplaces. More learners now take the tests.

Quality of education and training

49. Inspectors observed five training sessions and graded all as satisfactory or better. In the best sessions, tutors showed good understanding and in-depth knowledge of NVQ and key skills units. Training is planned and delivered in a satisfactory manner that encourages and supports learners. Tutors use questions to encourage learners' participation in discussions. Learning is not always checked during training sessions. Many learners are encouraged to collect evidence from a wide range of sources, but there is some over-reliance on written work. Learners are enthusiastic about their learning.

50. Tutor/assessors and employers communicate well. They share information effectively to increase opportunities for learning in the workplace. Employers give learners a good, practical, comprehensive induction into workplace procedures. Most workplaces provide very good resources for both on- and off-the-job training, including opportunities for learners to access additional training days. Employers have become more involved in the progress review process since the previous inspection. They are aware of the learners' progress and work to support their achievement. Many employers are involved in the NVQ and most have a good understanding of its requirements. HTS responds quickly and effectively to any concerns employers may have.

51. HTS's tutors provide good learning materials to support each NVQ, technical certificate and key skills unit. Standardisation procedures ensure that all learning materials produced in-house are closely evaluated by a team of staff and are only made available to learners once they have been approved by HTS. Learners find these learning materials very helpful and there is clear evidence in learners' written work of the use that has been made of them. HTS's learning materials are written in clear language and are more accessible to learners than textbook materials. Tutor/assessors have appropriate vocational qualifications and most of them are qualified NVQ assessors. Staff are encouraged to increase the range of their qualifications and update their vocational knowledge.

52. Initial assessment is now satisfactory. Consideration of the learners' job role and assessment of their literacy, numeracy and key skills now leads to their placement on an appropriate NVQ level. All learners' literacy and numeracy skills are assessed during their induction programme. HTS provides satisfactory literacy and numeracy skills support. Where additional learning needs are identified, either at initial assessment or during training, tutors plan and deliver extra support sessions to meet them. Tutors are aware of where to seek more specialist advice. All tutors have received literacy and numeracy support training and many are receiving further training in a certificate of education. Tutor/assessors are aware of individual learning needs and deliver training sessions to meet them. Assessment is regular and most learners receive constructive feedback that enables them to resubmit written work at a satisfactory standard.

53. Learners' progress is reviewed every four to six weeks. Their knowledge of health and safety and of equality of opportunity matters is recorded and comprehensively checked throughout the programme through a range of questions. While progress reviews are frequent, progress towards all learning goals in the framework is not routinely monitored and discussed. Many action plans do not include enough short-term targets or detail.

54. HTS provides a comprehensive, satisfactory induction programme that is further enhanced through the employers' induction practices. Tutors are helpful and supportive.

Leadership and management

55. HTS has recognised that full framework completion is poor and has taken steps to secure improvement. Changes since the previous inspection include reduction in tutor/assessors' caseloads, integration of key skills training and assessment with the NVQ programme, the introduction of key skills qualification tests in the workplace, and more in-depth initial assessment.

56. HTS's self-assessment report identified some of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. However, many of the strengths it identified were no more than normal practice and it did not identify some weaknesses.

57. HTS's internal verification arrangements are satisfactory. All HTS tutor/assessors and internal verifiers have achieved or are working towards the appropriate NVQ assessor or verifier awards. An internal verification sampling plan for care programmes is established. Internal verification takes place when the tutor/assessors bring completed units to the HTS centre. The feedback from internal verifiers is detailed and helps assessors to improve their assessment practice. The internal verifiers carry out observation of assessment practice in a planned way. Assessor standardisation meetings take place regularly.

58. Support for new staff is good, and includes the shadowing of existing experienced tutor/assessors for at least four weeks.