

INSPECTION REPORT

Stubbing Court Training Limited

09 June 2005



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based 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 aged 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.

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes, as well as to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

INSPECTION REPORT

Stubbing Court Training Limited

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Stubbing Court Training Limited (SCT) is a private training company based near Chesterfield in Derbyshire. It was founded in 1982 to promote a competent, trained and educated workforce for the horse industry. SCT offers work-based learning in horse care for 47 learners. Twelve of these learners are advanced apprentices, 27 are apprentices and eight are following national vocational qualifications (NVQs) only. All learners take NVQs in horse care at level 2 or horse care and management at level 3. All learning is funded by the Derbyshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

2. SCT's full-time staff are a chief executive, a company director, an office manager and a trainee trainer/assessor. The company director deals with financial matters and acts as the internal verifier. The office manager also deals with key skills qualifications and learners' induction. SCT hires seven part-time trainers, 10 work-based assessors, four travelling assessors and a literacy and numeracy skills tutor. The staff have a range of specialist expertise in areas including health and safety, first aid and coaching.

3. SCT provides off-the-job training at its own premises near Chesterfield and at a variety of other training locations on equine yards throughout Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. Additional literacy and numeracy skills learning support is provided in the workplace by a specialist tutor. SCT subcontracts with a further education college for the observation of teaching sessions as part of its quality improvement measures.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 1

4. **The overall effectiveness of provision is outstanding.** SCT's leadership and management, including its arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement, are outstanding. Land-based provision is good.

5. **The inspection team had a high degree of confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** Self-assessment at SCT has been established and improved over a number of years. It is supported by a wide range of information including learners' and employers' feedback, data, observations, and external reports. The various strengths and areas for improvement identified in the self-assessment report largely matched those found by inspectors. With the exception of quality improvement, inspectors gave the same grades as those given by SCT in its self-assessment report.

6. **The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to maintain the high quality of provision.** SCT has a clear and effective commitment to quality improvement. It regularly updates policies and procedures, and frequently evaluates their implementation. SCT seeks feedback from a range of sources, and analyses data very well. Training sessions are frequently observed, including the work of on-the-job trainers. The development plan clearly identifies actions for improvement. The good and outstanding inspection grades given at the previous inspection have been maintained.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR STUBBING COURT TRAINING LIMITED:

- maintain and further improve the quality of provision
- develop strategies for the improvement of small group teaching

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

Leadership and management		1
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		1
Quality improvement		1

Land-based provision			1
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
<i>Equine</i>			<i>1</i>
Apprenticeships for young people	47		1

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. All provision offered by SCT was inspected. The inspection took place during the one inspection week.

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	8
Number of learners interviewed	25
Number of staff interviewed	20
Number of employers interviewed	10
Number of subcontractors interviewed	1
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	14
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

8. **Retention and achievement rates are good and improving.** The improvement is similar for apprentices and advanced apprentices, approximately three-quarters of whom achieve

their full apprenticeship. The retention and achievement rates for NVQ learners, are slightly lower but are also improving.

9. Learners take great pride in the development of their assessment portfolios, which are generally of a good standard. The portfolios contain many photographs and diagrams as well as records of observations of performance.

10. SCT actively promotes the achievement of key skills qualifications. Key skills assessment is integrated well with NVQ assessment and is closely linked to learners' achievements in the workplace. Many learners achieve key skills qualifications within a few months of starting their programme.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

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

11. **Learners receive highly effective support from employers and assessors.** Their work activities are carefully recorded and well matched to occupational standards. Employers and trainers frequently assist in portfolio development and encourage learners to make best use of their day-to-day work activities.

12. Training is generally satisfactory or better. The good sessions make good reference to the NVQ and have a clear teaching plan. In other sessions, tutors make insufficient use of visual aids and do not consider the particular requirements of teaching small groups. The resources rooms used for teaching do not always offer the best atmosphere for learning.

13. **Learners are able to gain a good variety of learning experiences** at well-run and varied equine yards. Some learners can access additional training opportunities to compete at sporting events.

14. Learners can attend additional training events where a leading professional in the horse industry, demonstrates best practice. A recent masterclass was given by a past apprentice who is now a leading international rider. These events are open to learners, employers and trainers and demonstrate the level of achievement to which they can reasonably aspire. Learners often participate as stewards at international horse trials.

15. **Learners receive wide-ranging provision to support individual training needs.** Examples include specialist support for learners with disabilities such as hearing impairment, and adapted training programmes for learners unable to participate fully in the standard programmes. Learners with additional literacy and numeracy skills support needs receive particularly good on-the-job support.

16. SCT frequently celebrates learners' achievements through a newsletter, website and other publicity. Learners are entered for and have won national awards. Annual awards are made for the foundation, and advanced apprentice of the year.

Leadership and management

17. **Work-based learning is managed well.** Training is planned well and communication is good. Learners and their employers are kept well informed about the future programme of training events and receive regular reports on progress. SCT has a system for showing the assessment evidence requirements to all involved parties. It uses the same system to record achievements. Employers attend regular updates.

18. Internal verification is satisfactory. Assessment sampling activity is recorded in detail and assessors are given extensive written feedback. In one case, weakness in assessment practice, such as inappropriate photographic evidence, had not been picked up by internal verification.

19. **SCT has successfully engaged employers in the work-based learning process.** Employers have a clear understanding of how their contribution counts. SCT uses regular employers' forums to keep employers up to date on important topics such as new legislation and best practice. Excellent communication is maintained through regular newsletters and other information updates.

20. **Managers place a strong focus on raising retention and achievement rates.** This starts with rigorous selection of employers who will offer learners suitable opportunities. Learners undergo a trial period of work experience to assess their aptitude and support needs. They are encouraged to achieve in-house qualifications early to maintain their motivation. All parties involved in the programme are closely monitored to ensure that they are contributing to learners' success.

21. **Staff are managed well, particularly those who work remotely.** SCT uses a monthly meeting to monitor assessors' progress in dealing with learners. Tutors and assessors receive an appraisal every three months to manage their performance in more detail. Where necessary, staff receive additional training and support to help them in their roles.

22. **SCT is particularly innovative in its delivery in the workplace of skills for life,** the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language. An equine specialist makes frequent visits to learners with identified learning needs to support them in producing an assessment portfolio and to give them extra literacy and numeracy skills training. Some employers supply further support with training between visits.

23. **SCT has developed a good range of partnership activities within the learning sector** which have helped it to produce new training materials in areas such as skills for life. It has used its work with a national organisation to develop skills competitions and to research the value of these in helping to motivate learners.

24. SCT's promotion of equality of opportunity is very good. **It has a comprehensive range of regularly updated policies and procedures** which it distributes to all partners. **Equality of opportunity is reinforced well through ongoing learners' reviews,** the display of posters, additional training for employers and routine checking that learners are being exposed to a good range of learning opportunities. SCT **routinely monitors management information** to compare the performance of different groups of learners. It seeks feedback frequently from learners and their employers. Where necessary, SCT adjusts the learning programme to maintain learners' full participation.

25. **SCT takes positive action to widen the participation of groups not traditionally represented on programmes.** The proportion of learners who are men or who have a disability has increased. SCT's other activities include careers presentations to minority groups and work with schools.

26. **SCT's quality improvement arrangements are comprehensive.** The company regularly updates its policies and procedures for all key training processes. It regularly analyses learners' and employers' feedback. It observes on- and off-the-job training, and collects and analyses performance data very well. Clear targets are set for all those involved in improving the quality of provision. Staff appraisal is a key feature of quality improvement. Best practice is regularly sought and shared.

27. **The self-assessment and action-planning process is good.** SCT has a clear cycle for self-assessment and draws on a good range of information during the process. Improvement actions are regularly monitored.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- successful strategy to engage employers
- strong management focus on improving retention and achievement rates
- good partnership activities in the learning sector
- good management of remote workers
- innovative strategy to deliver skills for life in the workplace
- comprehensive range of equal opportunities policies and procedures
- good ongoing reinforcement of equality of opportunity
- good monitoring of equality of opportunity
- positive action to widen participation from under-represented groups
- comprehensive arrangements to secure quality improvement
- rigorous and accurate self-assessment

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses identified

Land-based provision

Equine

Grade 1

Strengths

- good and dramatically improved retention and achievement rates
- highly effective support from employers and assessors
- good opportunities for learners to gain a variety of learning experiences
- wide-ranging provision to meet individual learning needs

STUBBING COURT TRAINING LIMITED

- well-managed work-based learning

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses identified

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT STUBBING COURT TRAINING LIMITED:

- the enjoyable work with ponies and horses
- that training with SCT 'is not like college'
- the practical and theory activities
- that everyone is approachable and helpful
- the opportunity to participate in additional training events

WHAT LEARNERS THINK STUBBING COURT TRAINING LIMITED COULD IMPROVE:

- the amount of direct support with assessment portfolio-building
- the time available during the working week for portfolio-building

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 1

Strengths

- successful strategy to engage employers
- strong management focus on improving retention and achievement rates
- good partnership activities in the learning sector
- good management of remote workers
- innovative strategy to deliver skills for life in the workplace
- comprehensive range of equal opportunities policies and procedures
- good ongoing reinforcement of equality of opportunity
- good monitoring of equality of opportunity
- positive action to widen participation from under-represented groups
- comprehensive arrangements to secure quality improvement
- rigorous and accurate self-assessment

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses identified

28. SCT's strategy to engage employers fully in the work-based learning process has been particularly successful. Many employers have long-standing relationships with SCT and have developed open and productive working partnerships with the company. SCT reinforces these relationships through regular events aimed at keeping employers informed and inspired about best practice in the horse industry and work-based learning. For example, an annual employer's forum has focused on the effect of recent legislation on child protection, sports psychology and motivational techniques. Many employers have been engaged as trainers and assessors, and benefit from training and development activities organised by SCT. Assessors work closely with employers to ensure that they contribute to learners' reviews and take action plans for learners forward. SCT has carefully designed documents and systems to help employers understand the key processes of work-based learning and how they can contribute. All employers comment favourably on the access they have to SCT's senior managers, and the support that these managers provide. Excellent communication includes regular newsletters, general updates on training documents and systems, information about forthcoming training events and other information designed to share best practice. SCT has worked hard to ensure that employers fully understand the value of work-based learning for young people.

29. Managers place a strong focus on improving retention and achievement rates. This starts with the rigorous selection of employers who will offer a suitable opportunity for learners to flourish. Where necessary, employers are helped to develop an appropriate workplace. Recruitment arrangements now include a month of work experience before learners join the apprenticeship programme. Very few learners withdraw from this opportunity which has been designed to assess their initial practical aptitude and establish their likely support needs. SCT matches learners to employers carefully to motivate

opportunities for achievement. Once learners commence their apprenticeship, SCT makes strong efforts to maintain their motivation through the early achievement of qualifications such as an in-house level 1 qualification, which also provides good evidence for the main NVQ. A high level of individual support is provided during this initial period. Where necessary, learners' families are kept informed of learners' progress. Other strategies to improve retention and achievement rates include the close monitoring of assessors, rewards for achievement, the celebration of achievement, and the constant reinforcement through additional training events and other accolades that achievement will lead to overall success in life.

30. SCT has developed a good range of partnership activities to promote learning in the equine sector. Senior managers have become involved in a wide variety of initiatives and research projects. These include the sharing of best practice in work-based learning across the sector, contributing to research activities on learners' motivation, the preparation and piloting of innovative learning materials, and work with the sector skills council on developing the horse industry. Locally, SCT has productive relationships with the LSC and other providers. Over the last few years, SCT has taken a leading role setting up initiatives to promote the acquisition of skills. This has involved national skills competitions and opportunities for young people to participate in practical activities with horses.

31. SCT manages its remote staff well. This starts with regular and open communication through newsletters and other documents. Very regular supervision is maintained. Remote staff comment that senior managers are accessible and provide good help. Through a monthly telephone meeting, senior managers collect information on the performance of each assessor. Each learner's progress is carefully monitored and central records are updated so that managers have a clear measure of performance. A three-monthly appraisal is used to manage tutors' and assessors' performance in more detail. This includes self-assessment by staff, precise monitoring of previously set targets, and the setting of future targets. This is linked to staff development activities and, where needed, additional support for staff members is arranged, such as work shadowing of other staff. Very comprehensive staff records cover all appraisals, staff development, individual action plans, and continuing professional development.

32. SCT's strategy to deliver literacy and numeracy skills support in the workplace is particularly innovative. SCT has linked its strategy to the national skills for life initiative and has made use of a facilitator to support the development. A previous apprentice has been employed as a tutor to support learners identified as having an additional learning need in relation to skills for life. The tutor makes regular visits to the workplace and spends time with the learners, concentrating on supporting them to develop an accurate assessment portfolio. A range of activities are used to further develop learners' literacy and numeracy skills. These include the corrections of text taken from equine publications and the calculation of percentages and ratios from equine-related data. Learners are highly motivated by this support and comment on how the method of delivery is helping them to overcome their previous dislike of literacy and numeracy training. The tutor is working towards a nationally recognised award for teaching literacy and numeracy skills. The facilitator observes sessions periodically and gives useful feedback to the tutor. Some employers take an active interest in skills for life provision and further support its development between tutor visits. A range of learning materials has been developed which use horse industry-specific worksheets to develop learners' skills. This learning material is shortly to be made available for use nationally.

Equality of opportunity**Contributory grade 1**

33. SCT has an equal opportunities policy that is updated annually. This clearly and effectively communicates procedures in relation to complaints, grievance, appeals and harassment. A disability statement is issued to all applicants. SCT has recently been awarded a national quality award in relation to equality. The policy covers all parties involved in the training process. Staff receive training in relation to equality of opportunity and display a good understanding of the key topics as well as wider aspects such as dealing with learning difficulties. Staff development takes place regularly. Employers receive updates on relevant equal opportunities legislation through a monthly newsletter and from visiting speakers at the annual employers' forum. For example, a recent event concentrated on the implications of the Children's Act 2004. Employers value this information. Learners have a good recall of their induction on equality of opportunity. This places a strong emphasis on equality in the horse industry and uses interactive learning techniques to reinforce the subject.

34. SCT's good ongoing reinforcement of equality of opportunity is good. The first review of learners' progress following induction places a strong emphasis on checking learners' understanding of their induction to equality of opportunity. Subsequent reviews monitor learners' understanding of key topics such as harassment and bullying, dealing with grievances and respect for others. Learners have a very good understanding of these subjects and how to deal with them. As part of its agreement with them, SCT expects employers to display a poster reinforcing the main principles of good equal opportunities practice. Employers display these prominently. Routine equality monitoring is carried out to check that learners are being exposed to a full range of workplace learning and development opportunities. Where necessary, SCT and employers arrange for learners to attend other workplaces to access opportunities not available at the normal place of work. Learners and employers understand the importance of this in extending learners' experiences in the equine sector.

35. SCT routinely uses management information to judge the performance of different groups of learners. Managers use this information to check that all learners are receiving the same level of support and have the same access to learning and development to help them realise their potential. Analysis also includes recruitment trends and data on disability, gender and race. SCT uses feedback questionnaires to assess learners' and employers' understanding of equality of opportunity and takes action to remedy any inadequacies. Most feedback shows that learners and employers have a good understanding of equality of opportunity with very few incidents of inequality being reported. Where learners' circumstances change, their workplace is adjusted to allow them to continue their participation in the programme. For example, the working routines of a pregnant learner were adjusted to enable her to stay on the programme. In another case, a learner identified as having a hearing impairment was provided with suitable assistive telephone equipment. The employer received specialist training in deaf awareness. This meant that the learner did not face any additional barriers to achievement and was able to participate fully in the programme. Some yards are equipped with facilities for learners with disabilities following SCT's work with groups which promote riding for people with disabilities.

36. SCT has taken positive action to widen participation and to promote careers in the horse industry. It has targeted men, inner-city residents and minority ethnic groups. The proportion of men in SCT's intake has increased from 7 per cent in 2001-02 to 18 per cent in 2004-05. During the same period, the proportion of learners with disabilities rose from 9

per cent to 24 per cent. Efforts to increase the proportion of minority ethnic learners have been less successful. SCT's positive action to widen participation has included a range of innovative methods such as careers presentations where the promotional material uses positive images of men, and one-day courses targeted at men from minority ethnic groups in inner-city areas. Recent marketing activities have targeted schools pupils in years 10 and 11, with 34 pupils from 11 Derbyshire schools attending SCT for an introduction to work with horses. It is too early to assess the effect of this initiative on recruitment. SCT has recently developed a website to advertise training opportunities, and analysis indicates a high number of visits and downloads.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 1

37. SCT has comprehensive arrangements to secure quality improvement. These include wide-ranging quality assurance systems and procedures, supported by flowcharts, to describe the key processes of work-based learning such as recruitment, induction and assessment. For each key process, there is a periodic review during which amendments are made. These are recorded well through an audit record. The review of key processes takes place against an annual planning cycle whereby each process is examined at the most timely moment during the year. For example, induction arrangements used during the summer are reviewed in the spring. Amendments are made to documents and processes which ensure they reflect current legislation and best practice. For each key process a range of evaluation methods are used to check effectiveness. An audit cycle checks for compliance.

38. SCT uses feedback questionnaires to assess the effectiveness of key processes. Learners receive questionnaires after induction, following training sessions and annually as part of the self-assessment process. Feedback is sought from early leavers, annually from employers, and quarterly from staff as part of the appraisal process. SCT also seeks feedback following special events, such as employers' forums, masterclasses, and schools liaison activities. All feedback is carefully analysed and circulated to all relevant parties with actions for improvement clearly stated. This has helped SCT to secure improvement to provision. For example, the induction programme has been improved following feedback gathered during the past year. Subsequent feedback indicates an improved level of satisfaction among learners.

39. SCT uses a specialist subcontractor to observe off-the-job teaching sessions. Each tutor is observed twice a year. The first observation records strengths and areas for development. The second observation is used to monitor improvements in practice. Learning sessions are graded and careful analysis is carried out to check for improvements. Observation records are comprehensive, providing positive feedback on strengths observed during the session with recommendations. However, they place insufficient emphasis on providing practical tips to help tutors improve their performance. The observer attends staff training events to focus on improving teaching. For the past two years, teaching observations have been extended to on-the-job training sessions. The observer participates in the employers' forum to focus on improving teaching methods. Employers are working towards a coaching qualification. After initial reservations, employers now value the help they are receiving in improving their teaching techniques. A clear service level agreement is in place for this subcontracted activity, with thorough monitoring carried out by SCT's chief executive.

40. The quality improvement strategy includes good collection and analysis of

management information. Monthly supervision meetings are used to monitor the progress made by learners in achieving NVQ units and key skills qualifications. Monitoring records for each learner and assessor are comprehensive. Overall retention and achievement figures are analysed at least monthly. SCT has a very good understanding of its performance against national and local figures. Trends are routinely analysed. SCT has a very good understanding of how it is performing in fulfilling its contract with the LSC. It analyses the retention and achievement rates of different groups of learners and sets actions where a particular group is underperforming. Clear and realistic targets are in place in relation to retention and achievement. In addition, SCT carries out clear analysis of the destination of all leavers.

41. The staff appraisal system uses quarterly supervision meetings to monitor the performance of staff rigorously. In advance of these meetings, staff conduct a self-assessment of their performance and suggest areas for improvement. The appraisal checks learners' progress in achieving NVQ units and sets new targets for the next three-month period. Any barriers to achievement are discussed and remedial actions, such as additional staff development activities, are agreed. Aspects of best practice are identified for dissemination to other team members. Best practice is shared and promoted through regular formal communications with staff and employers, including a comprehensive newsletter and routine fact sheets which focus on best practice in delivering various aspects of work-based learning.

42. SCT's wide-ranging quality assurance measures contribute to the self-assessment process. An annual self-assessment cycle sets key dates for the collection of information which managers then use to make judgements about the quality of provision. Self-assessment is supported by a good range of information, including learners' and employers' feedback, reviews of performance, management information data, staff appraisal meetings, verifiers' reports, teaching observations, and internal audit. Information is collected in a timely fashion throughout the year according to a programme of key dates. Some aspects are reviewed annually while others are reviewed more frequently.

43. The final self-assessment report is produced during May of each year by SCT's chief executive, in a process that has operated since 1998. The process was improved in 2002 to place an increased emphasis on the review and analysis of data. Staff and employers contribute to self-assessment by commenting on the quality of provision during planned feedback questionnaires. Decisions about judgements and grades are the responsibility of the chief executive. These are shared with all staff during routine updates. Learners, assessors and employers are fully aware that their views will be taken on board as part of the quality improvement and self-assessment process. Staff and employers have insufficient involvement in openly discussing self-assessment grades and agreeing the various strengths and areas for development.

44. SCT's development planning identifies the actions required to maintain strengths and rectify weaknesses. The development plan is closely linked to SCT's strategic plan, although it is not fully clear how the actions set out in the development plan relate to the objectives set out in the strategic plan. The development plan is laid out well, with clear criteria for judging whether actions have been successful. Progress in delivering the development plan is monitored and reported every six months. The inspection team had a high degree of confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process. The various strengths and areas for improvement identified in the self-assessment report largely

matched those identified by inspectors, who gave the same grades as those claimed by SCT in the self-assessment.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Land-based provision

Grade 1

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Equine Apprenticeships for young people	47	1 1

45. Forty-seven learners are on horse care programmes. Of these, 12 are advanced apprentices, 27 are apprentices and eight are NVQ learners. Learners are recruited from schools, through the careers service and directly from employers. They receive an individual induction to the training programme, key skills qualifications, health and safety, and equality of opportunity at the start of the programme. Before this, they participate in a month's period of work experience. Employers include large competition yards, livery yards and riding schools across Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. Most training takes place in the workplace, provided either by the employer or a visiting trainer. Assessment takes place on the job. Reviews monitor learners' progress in achieving their qualification. Key skills training and assessment are integrated with the NVQ. Additional support is provided by a literacy and numeracy support tutor who visits the learners in their workplaces.

Equine

Grade 1

Strengths

- good and dramatically improved retention and achievement rates
- highly effective support from employers and assessors
- good opportunities for learners to gain a variety of learning experiences
- wide-ranging provision to meet individual learning needs
- well-managed work-based learning

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses identified

Achievement and standards

46. Retention and achievement rates are good and have very considerably improved since the previous inspection. The retention rate improved from 43 per cent for apprentices starting in 1999-2000 to 73 per cent for those starting in 2002-03. The framework completion rate for apprentices improved from 20 per cent to 73 per cent over the same period. Fifty-five per cent of the apprentices recruited in 2003-04 have completed, and the 23 per cent still in learning are on schedule to complete the framework shortly. All of the apprentices starting in 2004-05 are still on their programmes. For advanced apprenticeships, the retention and achievement rates improved from 20 per cent for 1999-2000 starters to 90 per cent for those starting in 2002-03. The retention rate has dipped to 67 per cent for the 2003-04 intake. All advanced apprentices starting in 2004-05 are still in learning. Retention and achievement rates for the few NVQ-only learners are slightly lower, but have shown a similar improvement pattern.

47. Learners take great pride in the development of their assessment portfolios, which are generally of a good standard. Photographs, diagrams and pictures are used in the learning process and as evidence for assessment decisions. However, there is sometimes an over-emphasis on photographic evidence. In some instances, photographs showing incorrect practice have been accepted by the assessor.

48. The achievement of key skills qualifications is actively promoted. Learners receive an effective induction to key skills qualifications at the start of a programme, providing detailed information on what they are and how they may be achieved. Some learners achieve their key skills qualifications rapidly. For example, one level 2 learner achieved the required key skills qualifications within seven months of starting. Key skills are supported well in the workplace. A member of staff will visit as required to provide individual support. Key skills training and assessment are integrated well with the NVQ. Specifically, evidence generated for the NVQ unit on maintaining effective working relations provides valuable evidence for the key skills qualification in working with others.

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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-00					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	7		15	100	10	100	11	100	15	100	30	100				
Retained*	0		10	67	9	90	10	91	9	60	6	20				
Successfully completed	0		5	33	9	90	10	91	8	53	6	20				
Still in learning	7		5	33	0	0	0	0	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

LSC funded work-based learning																
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-00					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	22		22	100	22	100	20	100	20	100	7	100				
Retained*	0		12	55	16	73	11	55	10	50	3	43				
Successfully completed	0		12	55	16	73	11	55	10	50	0	0				
Still in learning	22		5	23	0	0	0	0	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

LSC funded work-based learning																
NVQ Training	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01		1999-00					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	8		13	100	10	100	52	100	34	100	14	100				
Retained*	0		7	54	6	60	36	69	16	47	5	36				
Successfully completed	0		7	54	6	60	36	69	16	47	5	36				
Still in learning	6		2	15	0	0	0	0	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

The quality of provision

49. Learners receive highly effective support from employers and assessors. A monthly report is completed by the employer, who in some cases is the assessor. This provides an accurate account of the work that learners have carried out and is effective in matching this work activity to the occupational standards. Employers and trainers frequently assist in portfolio development work and encourage learners to use their day-to-day work activities when compiling evidence for future assessment. Records of assessments can be difficult to follow. Practical observation records are stored separately from the portfolio and do not always fully use the evidence in the portfolio. Written feedback on unsuccessful assessments is recorded on an action plan with helpful details of further work needed to reach the required standard.

50. Training is satisfactory or better. A scheme of work details the subject to be covered. Standards were reinforced well in the more effective sessions. The less effective sessions did not have a clear plan and tutors were easily deflected from their intended teaching. In most cases, the location used for teaching was cramped and uninspiring. Tutors did not have a board or facilities to note important points and the learning process was restricted. Learners were not always able to sit at a table to take notes or carry out written learning activities. However, learners value the training sessions and find them beneficial in developing their skills and understanding.

51. Learners are able to gain a good variety of learning experiences. Most yards are run well and provide a wide range of training opportunities. In the best yards, which include riding schools, livery stables, competition establishments and show centres, learners will gain additional opportunities which include riding. In one yard, a level 3 learner has been given the opportunity to take part in affiliated horse trials and is being given effective private tuition to prepare for the competitions ahead. Learners are enthusiastic about taking part in additional activities, frequently in their own time. Sessions include extra riding lessons, clear-round show jumping and cross-country practice. However, in some yards, monitoring of training provision has not identified inappropriate work practices. In one instance this was reflected in assessment evidence, where photographs showed incorrect work practices.

52. SCT has organised a series of masterclass sessions taken by an internationally renowned trainer. The sessions are open to all trainers, employers and learners and employers nominate learners for riding places. The sessions are valued by all and provide incentives for progress. In addition to taking part, learners gain clear insight into training horses by being able to watch their trainers and employers being taught. Learners are

proud of taking part, often inviting their parents to the masterclass. In addition, learners make visits to the yards of previous learners, some of whom are now in senior positions. This shows learners examples of achievements to which they can reasonably aspire. Learners participate in supporting international horse trials, performing stewarding duties and maintaining records of scores.

53. SCT provides wide-ranging support for individual learning needs. A profoundly deaf learner has been provided with a writer to assist in classroom sessions. They have also been given additional equipment such as an electronic heart rate monitor which provides a visual reading when held against the horse's skin. Access to off-the-job training is good. Training is provided at locations across the geographical area covered by SCT so that learners can attend, and SCT helps those with transport difficulties. Learners with specific additional learning needs receive effective support. A comprehensive induction programme identifies each learner's needs and extra literacy, numeracy and key skills support is provided between off-the-job training sessions. In some cases, individual assistance is provided in scheduled classroom sessions, which has enabled learners to make significant progress.

54. SCT places considerable emphasis on celebrating learners' achievements. A widely circulated bi-monthly newsletter welcomes new learners and details latest achievements, which have included the award of a prestigious medal of excellence for the land-based sector. SCT gives an award for the apprentice of the year, rewarding exceptional standards of work, commitment to the qualification and progress toward achievement. Apprentices should be nominated by their employer and selected by their assessor.

Leadership and management

55. Overall, work-based learning is managed well. Training is planned well. Off-the-job training sessions are delivered every two to four weeks. Locations are selected to give learners the best opportunities for attendance. Learners are informed well in advance of the dates, venues and subjects to be covered in organised training sessions. Training is monitored well. At the end of each scheduled training session, all learners receive an action plan of work to be carried out or practices performed before the next training session. Learners and their trainers value this clear picture of the work that will have to be covered before the next training session. This is mostly work that needs to be practised but is valuable in preparing learners for assessment. All learners receive a four-weekly report. This report details the work learners have carried out over the previous four weeks, matched accurately to the NVQ standards.

56. Communication links between learners' workplaces and SCT are good. Monitoring officers pay regular visits to the training locations. Each learner is given a skills check which details assessment and evidence requirements for all the units within the NVQ. Learners have this information with their employer, assessor and off-the-job trainer. The skills check provides a good means of recording when training has been completed and when the learner is ready for assessment. When assessment has occurred, the successful result is entered on a monitoring grid. The skills check is maintained and used well by the learners, employers, trainers and assessors. It is effective in monitoring the progress of the learner. The newsletter provides news of forthcoming events. Employers are involved in regular updating sessions held at least annually. Employers speak highly of a recent employers' forum where specialist speakers covered legal matters within riding establishments, sports coaching and motivational techniques.

57. Internal verification is satisfactory. Sampling activity includes all assessors and candidates and is recorded in detail. Assessors receive extensive written feedback, but some records are difficult to read and are not always linked to the learners' portfolio. In one case, weakness in assessment practice, such as inappropriate photographic evidence, had not been picked up by internal verification. However, the unit has not yet been externally verified, and certification has not been claimed.

