

INSPECTION REPORT

British Racing School

13 October 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.
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**)

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*

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British Racing School

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. The British Racing School (the BRS) is a registered charity overseen by a board of trustees. Its role is to provide training for the horse racing industry. It was set up in 1983 and operates from a head office and training centre at Newmarket in Suffolk. Under the rules of racing, administered by The Jockey Club, it is mandatory for all those under the age of 19 who wish to work as stable staff in a trainer's yard to undergo training. There are an estimated 600 licensed trainers and 6,000 full- and part-time staff working in the racing industry. They are based throughout the country but are mainly concentrated at Newmarket in Suffolk, Lambourn in Berkshire and Middleham in Yorkshire. The location of learners reflects this national pattern. The BRS contracts with Suffolk Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide apprenticeships for young people.
2. The board of trustees is made up of members representing all aspects of the racing industry. This is augmented by a trainers' committee, made up of employers from the horse racing industry, which are in different parts of the country. The senior management team comprises a chief executive and three senior managers. There are 31 full-time and 18 part-time staff.
3. The BRS offers training for apprentices and advanced apprentices in racehorse care. A few learners who have learning disabilities are working towards national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in racehorse care. Most learners start as apprentices and attend a nine-week intensive residential foundation course before moving into employment in the racing industry. The BRS recruits learners nationally and work placements are mostly in rural areas where unemployment rates are lower than the national average. Only 24 per cent of learners start their training having achieved five general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above. This is significantly lower than the national average of 53.4 per cent.
4. The BRS subcontracts training for the racehorse breeding option to the National Stud. Learners on the breeding option attend nine weeks of training at the National Stud before being placed at a suitable thoroughbred stud.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 1

5. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is outstanding.** The leadership and management are outstanding. Its arrangements for quality improvement and equality of opportunity are good. In agriculture, horticulture and animal care, the provision is outstanding.
6. **The inspection team had a high degree of confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** The organisation is self-critical and there is a strong commitment to improving its performance. Self-assessment is an established and valued tool in the quality improvement arrangements. Inspectors' grades matched all those in the self-assessment report. The process is inclusive and makes good use of data to make appropriate judgements about retention and achievement. The strengths and weaknesses

identified were appropriate and were also identified by inspectors.

7. The provider has demonstrated that it is in a good position to maintain the high quality of provision. Achievement and retention rates show continued improvement over the last four years. In particular, dramatic improvements have been made in the achievement rates for advanced apprentices. Since the previous inspection, the grades for leadership and management and the training in racehorse care have improved from grade 2 to grade 1. The BRS has taken action to resolve the weaknesses from the previous inspection as well as developing the strengths. The monitoring of key performance indicators using the balanced score card and performance score card methods is particularly successful and effective.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR BRITISH RACING SCHOOL:

- maintain the high quality of the provision
- introduce an effective process to improve the review and monitoring of learners' progress in the workplace

GRADES

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

Leadership and management		1
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		2
Quality improvement		2

Agriculture, horticulture and animal care			1
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Equine		1	
Apprenticeships for young people	208	1	
NVQ training for young people	2	1	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

8. The BRS only offers training in racehorse care and management and this was reported on and graded. Inspectors visited BRS three times in the six weeks leading up to the final inspection visit.

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	19
Number of learners interviewed	28
Number of staff interviewed	17
Number of employers interviewed	8
Number of subcontractors interviewed	1
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	2
Number of visits	3

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

9. **Learners complete the framework within the expected timescales.** During the foundation course learners make rapid progress towards their NVQ. Approximately 75 per cent of learners who start the nine-week course, complete it successfully. Once in employment, retention rates are very good. Around 90 per cent will go on to complete their planned length of stay and will achieve their full qualification. Approximately 70 per cent do so within the time expected. Over 80 per cent of learners who achieve the NVQ at level 2 are still employed in the racing industry 12 months later.

10. **Achievement for advanced apprentices has improved significantly and is now satisfactory.** Currently, 91 per cent of the advanced apprentices who started in 2004-05 are still in learning and are making good progress. Technical certificate results are good and 80 per cent of learners pass the exam at their first attempt.

11. **The development of key skills is very good.** They are taught and assessed in the context of the racing industry. Initial assessment is thorough and good use is made of specialist resources. Pass rates for the external tests are good at 75 per cent. Learners are set practice tests each week during the residential course. Support from key skills tutors is very good. Learners can receive specialist support for literacy and numeracy from a local subcontractor, Training Matters. Advanced apprentices can attend the BRS to work on key skills projects.

12. **The preparation for employment is very effective.** All learners who complete the residential course are guaranteed employment within the racing industry. Learners work to industry standards and at commercial speeds. Learners become competent and stylish riders. Many are quickly given opportunities to ride work and school horses, and work towards their jockey's licence. They develop the necessary personal skills to be successful

in the racing industry which demands hard work, long hours, commitment, courage and physical fitness.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Agriculture, horticulture and animal care	5	1	0	0	6
Total	5	1	0	0	6

13. The training at the BRS is excellent. Sessions are well planned and well structured. Training is effectively linked to the NVQ units and frequent tests are carried out to confirm learners' knowledge and understanding. Great attention is paid to health and safety, and learners are taught to handle thoroughbreds safely and confidently. Of the six teaching sessions observed during the inspection, five were outstanding and one was good. Learners make rapid progress in developing their riding skills. Instructors are extremely supportive and use their previous experience in the racing industry to good advantage. Videos are used extensively to help improve learners' riding performance.

14. The BRS has excellent resources that are well managed and used effectively to support training. There is a very good range of thoroughbred ex-racehorses. There are excellent purpose-built riding areas which include an indoor school, and circular and straight all-weather gallops. Learners can progress safely from the enclosed indoor school to cantering outside and finally to the more challenging straight gallop. The BRS yard is a realistic working environment which compares favourably with many commercial racing yards. Staff are well qualified and all have extensive experience in the racing industry.

15. Links with employers are very productive. Communication between employers and BRS's staff is excellent and working relationships are particularly good. Employers provide good opportunities for learners to gain experience. All yards are thoroughly checked before the learner is placed there. This includes a review of health and safety. Particular attention is paid to matching learners with yards which will meet their individual needs. Some learners are given the opportunity to gain additional training at alternative yards to broaden their experience.

16. Individual support for learners is very good. There is comprehensive and effective pastoral care. During the foundation course, learners have weekly reviews to discuss their progress. These reviews are used effectively to praise achievements and set targets for improvement. Learners are confident enough to discuss their fears and anxieties and reviewers are sympathetic and particularly helpful. Learners receive an end-of-course report which is shared with their employer when they start work. Each nine-week course includes life skills training. A 24-hour helpline is available to all learners. The racing industry's chaplain visits once a week. In the workplace, all learners are allocated a mentor for confidential help, advice and guidance.

17. Assessment practice is satisfactory and meets awarding body requirements. Assessments carried out at the BRS are well planned and clearly recorded. Regular assessments are carried out in the workplace throughout the programme with assessors visiting learners every eight weeks. Assessors use of a wide range of assessment methods including witness testimony, oral questioning and observation. However, there are some

inconsistencies in assessment practice. For example, the use of witness testimonies to prove practical competence is accepted by some assessors but not by others.

18. The progress reviews are inadequate for some learners. There is confusion between the processes of review and assessment. Assessors do not check the learners' progress against targets. Where targets are set they are often vague. Employers do not know whether the learner is on target to complete and cannot use the review paperwork effectively to plan the on-the-job training.

Leadership and management

19. Strategic management and planning are very good. The management structure is clear and effective. There is good central management of assessment for the NVQ and key skills. All developments are fully endorsed and supported by the trustees. Good use is made of a summary version of the annual business plan and all staff have a clear understanding of the aims and objectives for the coming year. Staff have well-defined roles and responsibilities, and communication is particularly good. The senior management team meets monthly and carries out a full and detailed review of progress against BRS's own key performance indicators and the targets set in the contract with the LSC.

20. Excellent use is made of the management information system. All senior managers are familiar with the system, have access to it and are able to use it effectively. The data is accurate and is used effectively to support management decisions. A number of useful monthly reports are produced and used at the senior management team meetings. There is good use of data to research special projects. All documents are stored on a central information technology (IT) system.

21. Links with industry are very effective and productive. New courses are developed in response to consultation with the industry. The links with industry are very productive when fundraising for capital items. The new accommodation is of an excellent standard. High-profile personalities from the racing industry visit regularly. The BRS has a full and busy visitor programme. A trainers' committee meets three times a year and is an excellent formal mechanism for gathering the views of employers. All staff are encouraged to return to industry every year.

22. Financial management is very strong. Detailed reports are produced every month and are shared with the trustees who play an important part in monitoring the financial health of the organisation. A careful balance is maintained between the commercial activities of the BRS and the purpose of the charity.

23. The BRS has a good strategy for the development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills. Key skills are achieved while learners attend the nine-week foundation course. Evening tutors provide good support alongside the key skills sessions which form part of the weekly timetable. Good use is made of a local subcontractor to provide specialist support if appropriate. All training staff have achieved the NVQ in training and development at level 3. Advanced apprentices have off-the-job training which is designed to meet their individual needs.

24. The BRS's management of its subcontractor, the National Stud, is satisfactory. The BRS's staff carry out regular audits of the National Stud's training and meet routinely with

training staff to share good practice. The BRS has taken strong action to ensure compliance with their contract. Achievement rates on the breeding option have improved significantly in the last year.

25. The staff appraisal system and procedures are satisfactory. Staff have six-monthly appraisals which result in personal development plans. Recently an audit has been carried out of individual training needs to identify common themes and to produce an overall company learning plan.

26. **The promotion of horse welfare to learners is excellent at the BRS.** Standards of stable management are excellent. Learners are taught to respect and care for the horses. Particularly good attention is paid to hygiene and cleanliness. During riding sessions there is very careful matching of learners to horses. A very good balance is kept between the need to challenge learners and the welfare of the horse.

27. **The BRS has very good marketing and recruitment strategies and processes** which promote inclusion. The BRS has targeted the under representation of learners from minority ethnic groups and those from inner city areas. It has been very successful in widening participation. There are excellent working relationships with Connexions and these are used effectively to attract learners from a wide range of backgrounds. The BRS holds taster mornings once a month either in the school holidays or on a Saturday. If appropriate, learners are offered a two-day induction programme before accepting a place on the foundation course. The new website which was launched in 2004 provides clear guidance on what is on offer. Applicants can also request information by text. A dedicated careers co-ordinator is available to provide personal advice.

28. The BRS is in its fourth year of participating in a very successful 'Increased Flexibility Scheme' for 14-16 year olds. A group of 10 pupils attend one day a week in year 10 and year 11 and work towards NVQs at levels 1 and 2 in racehorse care. Achievement rates are excellent and attendance is nearly 100 per cent throughout the year.

29. **There have been good initiatives to promote the awareness and understanding of equality of opportunity** at the school and in the workplace. A simple equality statement is displayed prominently throughout the BRS's premises. There is a detailed guidance for staff on equal opportunities relating to the thoroughbred racing industry. Assessors promote the understanding of equality and diversity by directing trainers to the National Trainers Federation equal opportunities policy or that of the BRS.

30. **The knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity which is gained at the centre is not reinforced in the workplace.** Equality and diversity is only mentioned briefly during the reviews and no attempt is made to broaden or reinforce learners' understanding. The BRS recognises the need to further improve the monitoring of employers' equality of opportunity practices. A disability access audit was carried out in June 2005 and the BRS is currently putting the recommendations into place.

31. **The BRS has implemented effective strategies to improve the quality of provision** since the previous inspection in May 2002. The BRS has totally restructured the management of the advanced apprenticeship programme. Two full-time assessors have been appointed, and assessment strategies and arrangements for key skills have been revised. In particular, the recruitment criteria for advanced apprentices have been revised

and improved. Since these changes have been implemented, there has been a significant improvement in the success rate of advanced apprentices.

32. The organisation is self-critical and there is a strong commitment to improving its performance. The BRS has effective mechanisms to gather feedback through its very strong links with the racing industry. This feedback is used to improve the quality of the training. Trainer and learner surveys indicate a high satisfaction rate with the training programme, and indicate that learners are well prepared for work within the racing industry.

33. Observation of riding training at the centre is reviewed every six months by an external consultant who is an Olympic equestrian coach and a Fellow of the British Horse Society. Effective collection and analysis of data has been used in the production of a performance monitoring scorecard. Implemented in 2004, this scorecard system has had a dramatic effect on identifying targets that need to be achieved, and these are monitored effectively during the senior management team meetings. The BRS has recognised that the performance of the subcontractor, the National Stud, had been unsatisfactory. There have been major changes in the provision, including the implementation of new procedures, which match those used by the BRS.

34. Self-assessment is an established and valued tool in the quality improvement arrangements. Inspectors' grades matched all those in the self-assessment report. The process is inclusive and makes good use of data to make appropriate judgements about retention and achievement. The strengths and weaknesses identified were appropriate and matched those identified by inspectors.

35. Internal verification meets the standards required by the awarding body. Training days for assessors are held twice a year but do not include the improvement of assessment practice. There are some inconsistencies in the recording of assessment and in the implementation of the awarding body guidelines. The internal verification process has not identified the confusion that has arisen between assessment plans and progress reviews.

36. The BRS is still in the process of designing software to allow formal and systematic monitoring of learners' progress. There is no central comparative record of learners' progress. Managers are not able to compare the performance of different assessors or different areas of the country easily and routinely.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- very good strategic planning and management
- excellent use of the management information system
- very effective and productive links with industry
- very strong financial management
- good strategies to support the development of literacy and numeracy
- successful strategies to improve the quality of the provision
- very good marketing and recruitment strategies and processes

BRITISH RACING SCHOOL

- good initiatives to promote equality and diversity

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses identified

Agriculture, horticulture and animal care

Equine

Grade 1

Strengths

- good achievement of apprenticeships within expected timescales
- very good development of key skills
- very effective preparation for employment
- excellent training at the BRS
- excellent resources for training
- very good links with employers
- particularly good and comprehensive individual pastoral support
- very good promotion of horse welfare to learners at the BRS

Weaknesses

- inadequate review process in the workplace for some learners

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT BRITISH RACING SCHOOL:

- 'everything!'
- the nine-week foundation course - 'it helps us to grow up'
- having someone to contact for help and getting lots of support
- 'the opportunity to go to the races!'

WHAT LEARNERS THINK BRITISH RACING SCHOOL COULD IMPROVE:

- the food in the canteen - 'there's not enough choice'

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 1

Strengths

- very good strategic planning and management
- excellent use of the management information system
- very effective and productive links with industry
- very strong financial management
- good strategies to support the development of literacy and numeracy
- successful strategies to improve the quality of the provision
- very good marketing and recruitment strategies and processes
- good initiatives to promote equality and diversity

Weaknesses

- no significant weaknesses identified

37. Strategic management and planning are very good. The management structure is clear and effective. New roles have been developed in response to a full review carried out in 2005 and include a training support and assessment co-ordinator. There is good central management of assessment for the NVQ and key skills. All developments are fully endorsed and supported by the trustees who play a very active role in the growth of the organisation. The board of trustees includes two employers, and trustees have an excellent understanding of the industry and its needs. Good use is made of a summary version of the annual business plan and all staff have a clear understanding of the aims and objectives for the coming year. Staff have well-defined roles and responsibilities and communication is particularly good. Staff meetings are held regularly and clear minutes are kept. The senior management team meets monthly and carries out a full and detailed review of progress against the BRS's own key performance indicators, as well as the targets set in the contract with the LSC. Senior managers have an excellent understanding of the whole process of training and meet every learner individually as part of the evaluation and placement process. New initiatives include the '10 to follow' scheme which aims to support the development of good management skills in 10 training yards to promote good practice in the racing industry.

38. The BRS makes excellent use of its management information system. All senior managers are familiar with the system, have access to it and are able to use it effectively. The data is accurate and is used effectively to support management decisions and to monitor the success of improvements made. The management information system is used to produce a number of useful monthly reports which are used at the senior management team meetings. However, it is also used to research special projects. For example, recently a full analysis was carried out of the reasons why learners might change jobs within a month of starting employment. All documents are stored on a central IT system. These include lesson plans, timetables, information about assessment and internal verification, and all standard forms.

39. Links with industry are very effective and productive. New courses are developed in response to consultation with the industry. Senior managers' knowledge and contacts within the racing industry ensures that individual placements are secured for all learners on completion of their nine-week foundation course. This knowledge is also very productive when fundraising for capital items. For example, funds were secured for the new accommodation block and the technology suite is sponsored by a racing industry organisation. The new accommodation is of an excellent standard. A donation from a national racing newspaper has allowed the establishment of a new library. High-profile personalities from the racing industry regularly accept invitations to share their experiences with learners or to award end-of-course certificates. The BRS welcomes visitors and has a full and busy visitor programme. A trainers committee meets three times a year and is an excellent formal mechanism for gathering the views of employers. All staff are encouraged to return to industry every year as part of their continuous professional development.

40. Financial management is very strong. Detailed reports are produced every month which identify the organisations' financial position. These are shared with the trustees who play an important part in monitoring the financial health of the organisation. A careful balance is maintained between the commercial activities of the BRS and the purpose of the charity. For example, very good use is made of the facilities to generate income from conferences, but this is never at the expense of allowing their full use for learners.

41. The BRS has a good strategy for the development of learners' literacy and numeracy skills. Key skills are achieved while learners attend the nine-week foundation course. They are taught and assessed in the context of the racing industry. Evening tutors provide good support alongside the key skills sessions which form part of the weekly timetable. Good use is made of a local subcontractor, Training Matters, to provide specialist support if appropriate. Learners can be placed in Newmarket yards if they require continued specialist support to complete their qualification. All training staff have achieved the NVQ in training and development at level 3 and have a good awareness of how to recognise learners' needs. Advanced apprentices have tailored off-the-job training, including key skills training, designed to meet their individual needs.

42. The BRS's management of its subcontractor, the National Stud, is satisfactory. The BRS's staff carry out regular audits of the National Stud's training and meet routinely with the stud's training staff to share good practice. The BRS has shared its working practices and procedures with the National Stud and has taken strong action to ensure compliance with their contract. Achievement rates on the breeding option have improved significantly in the last year.

43. The staff appraisal system and procedures are satisfactory. Staff have six-monthly appraisals which result in personal development plans. Recently an audit has been carried out of individual training needs to identify common themes and to produce an overall company learning plan.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

44. The BRS has very good marketing and recruitment strategies and processes which promote inclusion. Considerable effort is made to market the opportunities available within the racing industry to young people across a wide spectrum of the population. The BRS has targeted the under representation of learners from minority ethnic groups and those from inner-city areas. This approach has included presentations at the BRS to youth

organisations who work with young people from these target groups. The BRS has been very successful in widening participation. The only criterion that prevents a learner entering the horse-racing industry as a rider is if they are over 10 stone in weight. However, this is still considered on an individual basis and young people who cannot meet this criterion are directed towards the National Stud programme. Twenty-three per cent of learners are recruited from cities and many have never ridden a horse before starting the nine-week foundation programme. Seventy-five per cent of all learners who start at the BRS have not achieved five GCSEs at grade C or above. There are excellent working relationships with Connexions and these are used effectively to attract learners from a wide range of backgrounds. The BRS holds taster mornings once a month, either in the school holidays or on a Saturday. Prospective learners are encouraged to attend to see the facilities, understand the requirements of the racing industry, and have the opportunity to visit a training establishment in the Newmarket area. Thirty per cent of learners are recruited from these taster days. If appropriate, learners are offered a two-day induction programme before accepting a place on the foundation course. This helps them to experience what it will be like to start the course and to work in the racing industry. Potential learners who attend are usually those who have never had any contact with horses before or are unsure about working with racehorses. Every opportunity is given to assist youngsters to make the decision whether to enter the industry. The new website, which was launched in 2004, provides clear guidance on what is on offer and applications can be submitted online. Applicants can also request information by text. A dedicated careers co-ordinator is available to provide personal advice.

45. The BRS is in its fourth year of participating in a very successful 'Increased Flexibility Scheme' for 14-16 year olds. A group of 10 pupils attend one day a week in year 10 and year 11 and work towards NVQs at levels 1 and 2 in racehorse care. Achievement rates are excellent and attendance is nearly 100 per cent throughout the year.

46. There are many case notes of severely disadvantaged learners who successfully start the nine-week programme, learn to ride a racehorse, move into the employment and achieve their qualification. If a learner is not able to complete the nine-week foundation course, detailed advice and guidance is given in a positive and supportive manner about other opportunities in working with horses.

47. After the self-assessment, the BRS identified the need for a comprehensive review of the equal opportunities policy and procedures and this has been completed. There have been good initiatives to promote the awareness and understanding of equality of opportunity at the school and in the workplace. A simple equality of opportunity statement is displayed prominently throughout the BRS's premises. A consultant was commissioned to help identify current legislative requirements. The BRS has produced detailed guidance for staff on equality relating to the thoroughbred racing industry. This guidance has been well received by staff. Assessors promote the understanding of equality and diversity by directing trainers to the National Trainers Federation equal opportunities policy or that of the BRS. Learners are encouraged during the nine-week course to increase their knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity. The training staff make good use of excellent videos which produce lively discussion. Learners are encouraged to give feedback on what they have learnt. Learners have a good awareness of the complaints procedure and the BRS responds promptly and effectively to any complaints it receives.

48. The knowledge and understanding gained at the centre on equality and diversity is not

reinforced in the workplace. Equality and diversity are only mentioned briefly during the reviews and no attempt is made to broaden or reinforce learners' understanding. Although learners are well protected and are aware of the appeals and complaints procedure, they often have only a superficial understanding of the broader aspects of diversity. The BRS recognises the need to further improve the monitoring of employers' equality of opportunity practices. As yet it has not devised an effective way to monitor the effectiveness of either its own or its employers equality of opportunity policy and procedures. A disability access audit was carried out in June 2005 and the BRS is currently putting the recommendations into place.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 2

49. The BRS has implemented effective strategies to improve the quality of provision since the previous inspection in May 2002. The quality of the advanced apprenticeship programme was a key weakness at the previous inspection. Since then the organisation has totally restructured the management of this programme. Two full-time assessors have been appointed, assessment strategies and arrangements for key skills have been revised. In particular, the recruitment criteria for advanced apprentices have been revised and improved. Since these changes there has been a significant improvement in the success rate of advanced apprentices.

50. The organisation is self-critical and there is a strong commitment to improving its performance. The BRS has effective mechanisms to gather feedback through its very strong links with the racing industry. These include the use of annual questionnaires. This feedback is used to improve the quality of the training. For example, the riding training has been changed to increase the learners' general horsemanship skills in response to requests from trainers. Evaluations are carried out with every group of learners at the end of their residential training. Results from evaluations are analysed and action is taken promptly to improve performance. Trainer and learner surveys indicate a high satisfaction rate with the training programme, and indicate that learners are well prepared for work in the racing industry.

51. Observation of riding training at the centre is reviewed every six months by an external consultant who is an Olympic equestrian coach and a Fellow of the British Horse Society. This expert feedback is highly regarded by the training staff and learners. The recent management restructure has resulted in training teams meeting monthly to discuss learners' progress in depth. The training office has been redeveloped so that it is now open plan and staff can readily discuss and respond to concerns promptly and effectively. This quick response is clearly appreciated by the assessors who are often some considerable distance from the centre. Data is collected and analysed effectively and a performance monitoring scorecard has been produced. Implemented in 2004, this scorecard system has had a dramatic effect on identifying targets that need to be achieved, and these are monitored effectively during the senior management team meetings. The results of the monitoring are shared with all staff. Failure to meet the targets is closely scrutinised and analysed to identify the causes and make changes. The BRS recognised that the performance of the subcontractor, the National Stud, had been unsatisfactory. The BRS advised them that improvement in the apprenticeship programme was conditional for the continuation of the subcontractor arrangement. There have been major changes in the provision, including the implementation of new procedures, which match those used by the BRS.

52. Self-assessment is an established and valued tool in the quality improvement

arrangements. Inspectors' grades matched all those in the self-assessment report. The process is inclusive and makes good use of data to make appropriate judgements about retention and achievement. The strengths and weaknesses identified were appropriate and matched those identified by inspectors.

53. Internal verification meets the standards required by the awarding body. Training days for assessors are held twice a year, but do not include the improvement of assessment practice. There are some inconsistencies in the recording of assessment and in the implementation of the awarding body guidelines. There are no detailed plans of when assessors are going to be observed or what has to be done. The internal verification process has not identified the confusion that has arisen between assessment plans and progress reviews. Although there has been observation of assessment there has been no observation of assessors carrying out reviews.

54. The BRS is still in the process of designing software to allow formal and systematic monitoring of learners' progress. Although the progress of learners is discussed frequently and all reviews are checked for indications of achievement of units, there is no central record of learners' progress. Managers are not able to compare the performance of different assessors or different areas of the country easily and routinely.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Agriculture, horticulture and animal care

Grade 1

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Equine		1
Apprenticeships for young people	208	1
NVQ training for young people	2	1

55. The BRS offers training towards NVQ at level 2 in racehorse care and NVQ at level 3 in racehorse care and management. Most learners are recruited as apprentices and many progress to advanced apprenticeships on completion of their qualification. Learners are recruited nationally through Connexions, careers advice days, taster days, advertisements in specialist magazines and the BRS's website. Some learners are recruited directly from employers, as it is a requirement of the Jockey Club that all stable staff under the age of 19 undergo training. The BRS subcontracts training for those who wish to follow the NVQ breeding option to the National Stud. Apprentices on the riding option start their training programme with a nine-week foundation course of residential training at the BRS. During this time, they aim to achieve six of the 10 units of the level 2 NVQ and the key skills. Learners who complete this foundation course are guaranteed a job in the racing industry. Assessors visit the learners every eight weeks to complete the remaining units of the NVQ. Support for learners with additional learning needs is provided during the foundation course by a specialist subcontractor, Training Matters. Once in employment, assessors provide further support as required. Learners on the breeding option attend nine weeks of residential training at the National Stud before being placed in employment with a thoroughbred stud.

Equine

Grade 1

Strengths

- good achievement of apprenticeships within expected timescales
- very good development of key skills
- very effective preparation for employment
- excellent training at the BRS
- excellent resources for training
- very good links with employers
- particularly good and comprehensive individual pastoral support
- very good promotion of horse welfare to learners at the BRS

Weaknesses

- inadequate review process in the workplace for some learners

Achievement and standards

56. There is good achievement of apprenticeships within the expected timescales.

Learners follow an intensive nine-week initial training programme based at the BRS. During this time, learners make rapid progress towards their NVQ. Many achieve six units and most learners achieve the key skills element of the framework. On average, over the past five years, approximately 75 per cent of the learners who started the nine-week course, completed it successfully. Once these learners enter employment, retention rates are very good. Since 2003, 90 per cent have gone on to complete their planned length of stay and have achieved their full qualification. Approximately 70 per cent of them do so within the time expected. The BRS makes every effort to help learners complete the foundation course successfully. At the four-week stage, learners can restart the course if they are not making sufficient progress. Of the apprentices who were expected to complete their training in 2003-04, 68 per cent completed their full framework. Of those who started in 2004-2005, 10 per cent have completed their framework and a further 55 per cent are still in learning and are making very good progress. Achievement of the NVQ is particularly good. Eighty-four per cent of the learners who were expected to complete in 2003-04 achieved the NVQ at level 2. The BRS is able to follow learners in the workplace using its privileged access to the racing industry staff database. Routine checks show that over 80 per cent of learners who achieved their NVQ at level 2 are still employed in the racing industry 12 months later.

57. The completion rate for advanced apprentices has improved significantly in the past three years and is now satisfactory. Currently 91 per cent of those who started in 2004-05 are still in learning and are making good progress. Technical certificates have recently been introduced and initial results are good, with 80 per cent of learners passing the exam at their first attempt.

58. The development of key skills is very good. They are taught and assessed in the context of the racing industry. Initial assessment is thorough and good use is made of specialist resources for key skills development. A specialist IT trainer teaches the IT skills. Learners are able to have two attempts at the external test during their foundation course. Pass rates for the external tests are high at 75 per cent. Learners are set practice tests each week during the residential course. Support from key skills tutors is very good. If necessary, learners can receive specialist support for literacy and numeracy from a local subcontractor, Training Matters. Advanced apprentices can attend the BRS to work on key skills projects. Useful and interesting projects are used to provide evidence for key skills for the advanced apprentices.

59. The preparation for employment is very effective. All learners who complete the residential course are guaranteed employment in the racing industry. Learners are well aware of the progress they have made and are justifiably proud of their achievements. They learn to work to industry standards and at commercial speeds. Careful attention is paid to the development of good riding skills and learners become competent and stylish riders. Many are quickly given opportunities to ride work and school horses and work towards their jockey's licence. Learners develop the necessary personal skills to be successful in the racing industry which demands hard work, long hours, commitment, courage and physical fitness. The BRS ensures that learners know the importance of being punctual, having a high standard of turn-out for themselves and their horses, presenting horses correctly at evening stables and dealing politely with owners and visitors.

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

Inspection:

LSC funded work-based learning																
Advanced apprenticeships	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	1		53		49		63	100	60	100						
Retained*	0		2		18		28	44	8	13						
Successfully completed	0		2		14		21	33	7	12						
Still in learning	1		48		15		3	5	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	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	24		211		192	100	212	100	237	100						
Retained*	0		38		118	61	115	54	163	69						
Successfully completed	0		21		110	57	112	53	149	63						
Still in learning	22		115		4	2	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													
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	5		8	100												
Retained*	1		3	38												
Successfully completed	1		2	25												
Still in learning	0		2	25												

*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

60. The training at the BRS is excellent. Sessions are well planned and well structured and very good use is made of lesson plans to ensure consistency. Training is effectively linked to the NVQ units and frequent tests are carried out to confirm learners' knowledge and understanding as they progress. Great attention is paid to health and safety, and learners are taught to handle thoroughbreds safely and confidently at the very start of the foundation course. Learners quickly learn how to work efficiently on the stable yard and provide good routine care for horses. Learners recognise the benefit of the training, have an excellent attitude and are very motivated. Of the six teaching sessions observed during the inspection, five were outstanding and one was good. Learners make rapid progress in developing their riding skills. Some learners start with little or no experience of riding, but by the end of the nine-week course they are able to gallop fit racehorses competently. Although instructors concentrate on those riding skills required to ride racehorses, they are also careful to develop more general riding aptitude and horsemanship. Additional training

is given to riders where necessary to improve their confidence. Learners receive constant and constructive help from their instructors. The ratio of instructors to learners is very good and during riding sessions there are always two instructors for every group. Instructors are extremely supportive and use their previous experience in the racing industry to good advantage. Videos are used extensively to help improve learners' riding performance. Once riders are able to work horses on the gallops, radio microphones are used so that instructors can talk to learners who are riding at speed some distance away. Instructors are able to support riders with the more difficult horses and situations, and quickly improve riders' techniques and their ability to hold horses during fast work. Advanced apprentices attend the BRS for individually tailored courses which meet their needs and their employers' needs. These courses may cover units of the NVQ which the learners are not able to achieve at work, or give additional support for key skills, or both. The BRS refunds the cost of learners' travel, offers them free accommodation and ensures that they continue to receive their full salary while training.

61. The BRS has excellent resources that are well managed and used effectively to support training. There is a very good range of thoroughbred ex-racehorses and two smaller ponies to ensure suitable mounts for learners of all abilities. Riders can progress to more challenging horses as their skills develop. Many of the horses are donated to the BRS after a successful racing career. There are excellent purpose-built riding areas which include an indoor school, and circular and straight all-weather gallops. Learners can progress safely from the enclosed indoor school to cantering outside and finally to the more challenging straight gallop. The gallops have recently been resurfaced and provide an excellent all-weather track. The radio microphones and headsets have recently been upgraded. The BRS yard is a realistic working environment which compares favourably with many commercial racing yards. It includes traditional and American barn-style stabling. There are three mechanical equicisor and three non-mechanical horse simulators. Head- and side-on digital cameras allow riders to view their own performance. Teaching rooms are equipped with audiovisual teaching systems and IT suites. Staff are well qualified and all have extensive experience in the racing industry. The accommodation is of a very high standard and all rooms are able to receive external telephone calls so that learners can talk to their friends and families in private.

62. Links with employers are very productive. Employers value the training programmes and are keen to support the BRS. Communication between employers and the BRS's staff is excellent, and working relationships are particularly good. Many learners are employed by well-known trainers and work in excellent environments. Employers provide good opportunities for learners to gain experience, for example many regularly accompany horses to the races. All yards are thoroughly checked before the placement of a learner. This includes a review of health and safety and the training opportunities, and support available for learners. The BRS pays particular attention to matching learners with yards which will meet their individual needs. For example, analysis of data showed that the highest proportion of learners who change jobs within a month was linked to weaker riders who were placed in Newmarket. As riding on the Newmarket heath is particularly challenging the BRS now restricts these placements to the learners who achieve above a certain riding score at the end of the foundation course. Some learners are also given the opportunity to gain additional training at alternative yards to broaden their experience.

63. Individual support is very good. There is comprehensive and effective pastoral care. During the foundation course, learners have weekly reviews to discuss their progress.

These reviews are extremely effective and are used to praise achievements and to set targets for improvement. Learners are confident enough to discuss their fears and anxieties and reviewers are sympathetic and particularly helpful. Learners are encouraged to assess their own performance and are helped to think of their own solutions to problems. Staff take a sympathetic and effective approach to dealing with poor performance. Learners receive an end-of-course report which is shared with their employer when they start work. Each nine-week course includes five evening sessions and one whole-day session on life skills from trained youth workers from a local organisation. Subjects include teamwork, drug awareness, diet, alcohol awareness, money management and sex education. There are residential wardens on duty 24 hours a day. A 24-hour helpline is available to all learners. The racing industry's chaplain visits once a week or more often if needed. Once in the workplace, all learners are allocated a mentor for confidential help, advice and guidance. Learners receive a briefing on the work of the racing welfare charity during their residential training.

64. Assessment practice is satisfactory and meets awarding body requirements. Assessments carried out at the BRS are well planned and clearly recorded. Regular assessments are carried out in the workplace throughout the programme with assessors visiting learners every eight weeks. There is a clear system to ensure all learners are visited within the timescale. Assessments are agreed in advance usually on the previous visit. The assessors have a good rapport with trainers and yard staff who respect their role in training. Assessors are provided with jockey club passes to allow access to learners for assessment on race days. Assessors use of a wide range of assessment methods including witness testimony, oral questioning and observation. However, there are some inconsistencies in assessment practice. For example, the use of witness testimonies to prove practical competence is accepted by some assessors but not by others.

65. There are inadequate progress reviews for some learners. In the best reviews, paperwork is completed thoroughly and fully. Detailed targets are set and learners and employers are clear about what has to be achieved before the next visit. However, for some learners, the reviews are used solely for assessment planning. In these cases there is confusion between the processes of review and assessment. Assessors do not check the learners' progress against mid- and long-term targets. Where short-term targets are set, they are often vague. Although employers receive good feedback on the results of assessment, they do not know whether the learner is achieving their targets and cannot use the review paperwork effectively to plan the on-the-job training.

Leadership and management

66. The importance of paying attention to horse welfare is excellent at the BRS. Standards of stable management are excellent. Staff and managers set a particularly good example to learners about the importance of the horses' health and wellbeing, which is in line with the horse industry's focus on the 'happy athlete'. Learners are taught to respect and care for the horses. Particularly good attention is paid to hygiene and cleanliness. During riding sessions, there is very careful matching of learners to horses. A very good balance is kept between the need to challenge learners and the welfare of the horse. For example, in one schooling session a learner was having difficulty maintaining a good position over the fences and was making it difficult for the horse to jump comfortably. As soon as the horse began to lose confidence the rider was switched to an easier horse to complete the session. The previous horse was walked until cool and relaxed before being returned to his stable. Riders are taught to reward their horses at the end of a session with a quiet word

and a pat, while staff give each horse a small treat. Good attention is paid to cooling off horses correctly and monitoring their workloads. Many of the horses have been at the BRS for a considerable time and are sound and healthy, and make a significant contribution to the learners' training.

67. Staff work particularly effectively as a team. Communication is very good and all staff contribute to the annual self-assessment. All staff know and share the strategic aims and objectives of the BRS. Staff development is good and all staff are encouraged to return to industry each year to update their skills and knowledge. Staff are well qualified and experienced.

68. There are clear policies and procedures for all aspects of the training programmes and a strong commitment to quality improvement. Internal verification is broadly satisfactory, but has not identified the discrepancies in assessment practice found by inspectors. Self-assessment is an established and valued part of the arrangements for quality improvement. All staff, learners and employers contribute to the self-assessment process. The National Stud, although not required to do so by the LSC, has produced its own self-assessment report as part of its new quality assurance arrangements.

69. There is good training in equality of opportunity during the initial training course, but there is too little reinforcement of equality and diversity in the workplace.