

INSPECTION REPORT

South Yorkshire Training Trust (Northern Racing College)

26 May 2006



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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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. The Northern Racing College (NRC) was established in 1984, and is run under the control of the South Yorkshire Training Trust, a charitable company limited by guarantee. Situated between Bawtry and Doncaster, the NRC is one of two racing schools in the country that offer specialist training for the horse racing industry. The college provides training for new recruits to the racing industry and for existing staff who work in the industry. Facilities include stabling for up to 60 racehorses at any one time, an indoor riding school, training gallops and a modern residential training centre. 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 NRC recruits learners nationally, many of whom have had no previous experience of horses and a high proportion have less than four general certificates of secondary education at grade C or above.
2. The NRC employs 26 staff, most whom are based at the NRC, providing teaching, assessment and internal verification resources, or supporting the training of learners either in the residential and training centre or through the provision of management and administrative support. Part-time tutors also provide some services to the NRC such as casual instructor cover, first aid training, and occasional assessment and verification services.
3. The NRC is funded by the South Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) through two contracts, one for the 10-week preparation course, known as the front-end course, and one for work-based learning. In addition, the horse racing industry makes a financial contribution to the NRC's work-based learning programmes.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 1

4. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is outstanding.** The leadership and management are outstanding, as are its arrangements for quality improvement. The arrangements for equality of opportunity are good. In agriculture, horticulture and animal care, the provision is outstanding.
5. **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. The process is inclusive and makes good use of data to make appropriate judgements on retention and achievement. The strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors were recognised by the organisation.
6. **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 in the past three years. Since the reinspection, the grades for leadership and management and the training in racehorse care have improved from grade 3 to grade 1. The NRC has taken action to deal with the weaknesses from the previous inspection as well as developing the strengths.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR SOUTH YORKSHIRE TRAINING TRUST (NORTHERN RACING COLLEGE):

- maintain high standards of provision
- improve management of training in the workplace

GRADES

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

Grades awarded at inspection

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

Agriculture, horticulture and animal care			1
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Equine		1	
Apprenticeships for young people	82	2	
Other government-funded provision	24	1	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

7. NRC offers a national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 1 through a 10-week residential course and an NVQ at level 2 in racehorse care and level 3 in racehorse care and management in the workplace. These were inspected and reported. No visits took place before the inspection week.

Number of inspectors	4
Number of inspection days	15
Number of learners interviewed	46
Number of staff interviewed	23
Number of employers interviewed	6
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	12
Number of partners/external agencies interviewed	1
Number of visits	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

8. **The achievement rates for the NVQ at level 1 are outstanding.** They have been consistently over 90 per cent since 2002 with over 100 learners annually. Ninety-three per cent of the 2005 intake have progressed into paid employment.

9. The framework completion rates are satisfactory and improving. Of the 50 apprentices who started in 2004-05, 20 have completed the framework and 12 are still in learning. Retention is consistently improving and is now good. Currently, 100 per cent of advanced apprentices and 92 per cent of apprentices have been retained.

10. **Preparation for work is very good.** All learners who achieve the NVQ at level 1 are guaranteed employment in the racing industry. Highly effective development of skills enables them to learn to work to industry standards and at commercial speeds. Excellent attention is paid to the development of good riding skills.

11. **Development of vocational skills in the workplaces is good.** Rapid progress is made in learners' ability to build on their riding experience from the front-end course. Any shortfalls of practical skills are properly dealt with by flexible attendance at the college.

The quality of provision

Grades given to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Total
Agriculture, horticulture and animal care	2	3	2	0	7
Total	2	3	2	0	7

12. **Teaching of riding at NRC is excellent.** There is outstanding team teaching which allows learners to make rapid progress in their riding skills. The very good use of modern technology is used to gain understanding of skills, including the use of simulators. Standards of health and safety are very high.

13. **Learners are fully aware of their progress in the workplace.** Learners are well motivated to achieve the work identified at their progress reviews. Many learners are on target to achieve the NVQ before their stated end date.

14. **A very good range of resources is available for learners in the workplace,** including specialised equipment such as solariums and horse walkers. Work placements are well matched to the requirements of the learners. Working relationships with employers are excellent and very supportive.

15. **Reviews in the workplace are effective** and take place every 10 weeks. Learners value the time to discuss their progress and to ensure targets are met. Mentors in the workplace are fully involved in the reviews and are clearly able to support learners' progress. However, progress reviews do not always identify specific and measurable details.

16. **The standard of welfare and care is very high.** Good guidance is given as many learners are living away from home for the first time. Recreational resources are good. Learners are confident enough to ask for help at any time.

17. Assessment and verification in the workplace is satisfactory. Feedback is clear and assessors use good questioning skills. Assessment is flexible and well planned to meet the needs of the learner. However, not all evidence that is generated in the portfolio is used for assessment, particularly at level 2. Level 3 portfolios include excellent use of witness testimony.

18. **Assessment at NRC is thorough and frequent.** Feedback is appropriate and clearly identifies what needs to be improved. Some records of assessment are not detailed, particularly when the learner has been referred.

19. **Although training in the workplace is good there is some poor planning.** Training is driven by the learner and although training in background knowledge is given it is not always checked, recognised or recorded.

Leadership and management

20. **Strategic planning and operational management are good.** Business objectives are clearly focused on teaching and learning. Staff are well aware of NRC's vision. Operational management is very effective. Communication is very good and staff teams

manage the learning programmes very well. Financial targets are set and carefully monitored.

21. There are strong and very productive links with industry and local and national organisations, which allows additional funds for a wide range of good resources. Participation in national industry specific groups is used well to compare provision and share good practice.

22. Management information is exceptionally well used to enhance learning. A comprehensive range of reliable data is regularly produced. There is a strong focus on monitoring success rates. Reports on progress towards the NVQ are regularly updated and monitored on a percentage basis and are well used by staff and learners.

23. Staff development is wide-ranging and used very effectively to improve the learning. A wide range of training has taken place. All teaching staff who do not have a teaching qualification are working towards the certificate in education, and this has improved the teaching practice.

24. The good range of high-quality resources is well managed by NRC. Residential accommodation is to a very high standard and is well managed. Good training facilities have been improved in recent years and include all-weather gallops. An increasing range of well-integrated commercial activities is used to further develop resources and give learners an opportunity to gain different experiences.

25. Management of basic and key skills support is satisfactory. Appropriate support is provided for individual needs. The recent appointment of a basic and key skills tutor has improved the achievement of key skills for the front-end course and offered more systematic support for learners in the workplace.

26. The self-assessment report clearly identifies insufficient management of training in the workplace. Recently secured industry funding is being used to develop a project with a number of racing yards to become more directly involved in managing and supporting workplace training.

27. Strategies to improve the provision are comprehensive. Staff responsibilities are clearly defined. A rigorous audit system ensures procedures are applied consistently at a high level. Changes are made promptly following feedback from learners and employers. For example, the amount of riding on the initial course has been increased. Sharing of good practice is consistently done at monthly quality improvement meetings.

28. Observation and feedback is comprehensive for all learning programmes. All staff are observed twice a year and new staff more frequently. Feedback is detailed and constructive and clearly identifies improvements to be made. Observations of workplace mentors are now carried out and this is strengthening the quality of training in the workplace.

29. Self-assessment is rigorous and accurate. Very good use is made of performance data and feedback from learners and employers to support judgements. Strengths and areas for improvement are clearly identified, although the effect of some strengths are underestimated. NRC has made good progress in developing strengths and resolving

weaknesses identified through self-assessment.

30. **Internal verification is systematic and sufficiently rigorous.** NRC has recognised the need for additional internal verifiers and training is being carried out.

31. **Strategies to widen participation and promote equality and diversity are good.** All staff have received accredited equality of opportunity training and have reached a good level of understanding. Data is used effectively to monitor enquiries, applications, and the progression into employment.

32. **The culture and ethos for widening participation is strong.** Non-riders and learners who exceed the industry weight limit are recruited and opportunities are sought for them in the industry. Considerable efforts are made to recruit learners from minority ethnic groups and numbers are currently higher than the industry average. Equality of opportunity is carefully monitored in the workplace. The complaints procedure is effective and rigorously applied. All learners receive well-structured training in equality and reinforcement of understanding takes place at several stages of their programme. However, some of the language used in training material is too complex for level 1 learners.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good strategic planning and operational management
- strong and productive links with industry and other organisations
- very good use of management information to enhance learning
- wide-ranging and very effective use of staff development
- very effective management of good resources
- very good strategies to widen participation and promote equality and diversity
- comprehensive and effective strategies to improve the quality of provision

Weaknesses

- insufficient management of training in the workplace

Agriculture, horticulture and animal care

Equine

Strengths

- outstanding achievement and progression on the college programme
- excellent riding tuition
- very good development of skills in preparation for employment
- high standard of welfare and care
- good management of training for NRC programmes
- good development of vocational skills in the workplace
- very good awareness of progress towards framework completion by learners

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- effective guidance for work-based learners
- good retention rates and improving framework completion rates

Weaknesses

- weak records of assessment
- insufficient planning of on-the-job training

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT SOUTH YORKSHIRE TRAINING TRUST (NORTHERN RACING COLLEGE):

- the support and training
- the instructors
- working with the horses
- the mentor system
- the preparation for employment
- learning to ride
- the facilities
- the whole package
- friendly and helpful staff

WHAT LEARNERS THINK SOUTH YORKSHIRE TRAINING TRUST (NORTHERN RACING COLLEGE) COULD IMPROVE:

- the riding - there could be more
- more accommodation - it is too crowded
- the food

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 1

Strengths

- good strategic planning and operational management
- strong and productive links with industry and other organisations
- very good use of management information to enhance learning
- wide-ranging and very effective use of staff development
- very effective management of good resources
- very good strategies to widen participation and promote equality and diversity
- comprehensive and effective strategies to improve the quality of provision

Weaknesses

- insufficient management of training in the workplace

33. Strategic planning and operational management are good. Provision is guided by a clear business development plan which focuses on learning and links closely with self-assessment. Business objectives are clearly focused on teaching, learning and the success of learners, as well as the wider skills needs of the racing industry. Staff are well aware of NRC's vision. NRC is closely involved in strategic developments in the industry to deal with future industry training needs. Operational management is very effective. Communication is very good and staff teams manage learning programmes very well. Frequent personal contact by managers with staff and learners is supported by regular, productive meetings. These clearly focus on improving provision and supporting learners and make good use of data to support decisions. Operational and financial targets are set and carefully monitored. NRC provides good value for money.

34. Links with industry and other local and national organisations are strong and very productive. NRC consults and works closely with a range of regulatory and funding organisations in the racing industry to develop training. Trust board members who are active in the racing industry provide good advice and support. Participation in national industry specific groups and local learning partnerships is used well to compare provision and share good practice. A training advisory group, including a racehorse trainer representative, effectively guides development.

35. Management information is used exceptionally well to enhance learning. A comprehensive range of reliable data is regularly produced covering all aspects of provision. This includes reports on progress towards business plan performance indicators, with a strong focus on monitoring success rates. Detailed information is provided to managers to monitor assessment visits and to identify due dates for monitoring visits and progress reviews. Reports on progress towards the NVQ are regularly updated and are used well by staff and learners. Quality assurance officers' laptop computers are updated with the learner database. This enables them to adjust their visit schedule while away from the office to allow them to see additional learners and make more effective use of their

time. Comprehensive data is used effectively to monitor equality of opportunity.

36. Staff development is wide-ranging and used very effectively to enable staff to develop skills to improve learning. Training needs which are linked to the needs of NRC are identified through a rigorous staff appraisal process which takes place twice a year. Staff are given time and funding support to carry out a wide range of training. All teaching staff who do not have a teaching qualification are currently working towards a certificate in education, and improvements in teaching practice have already been made. Additional verifier and assessor training is taking place. Externally accredited equal opportunities training was recently provided for all staff. Good support is also provided for technical updating in equestrian and racing industry skills and counselling and care skills for residential staff. Staff receive appropriate training in health and safety and child protection.

37. There is very good availability of high-quality resources which are well managed. NRC has been particularly successful in securing additional funding from a wide range of sources to develop the training and residential facilities. These include racing industry bodies, charitable trusts and government agencies. An active friends group provides additional funds. Residential accommodation is of a very high standard and is well managed. Good training facilities including all-weather gallops, an indoor riding school, stabling and thoroughbred ex-racehorses are used well for learning. An increasing range of well-integrated commercial activity contributes significant income to further develop resources and to fund learners additional to the LSC contract. Classrooms and an information and communications technology suite are of a good standard. However, some library resource material is out of date and is unsuitable for level 1 learners. Work-based learners are placed in racing yards that are carefully selected to meet their needs. All have appropriate training resources and residential accommodation. Many have outstanding practical facilities.

38. Management of basic and key skills support is satisfactory. Learners' basic skills needs are systematically identified at induction. Appropriate support is provided to meet individual needs. Learners work toward key skills at an appropriate level for their ability, not at the level that meets apprenticeship framework requirements. The appointment of a basic and key skills tutor has improved the achievement of key skills on the full-time course and allowed more systematic support for learners in the workplace.

39. NRC has recognised that there is insufficient management of training in the workplace. Quality assurance officers, workplace mentors and learners agree targets for further training, at review visits. There is, however, no planning of how workplace training will be organised and managed. The onus is inappropriately focused on learners to organise training themselves. NRC has recently secured industry funding to release workplace mentors in a number of pilot yards to become more directly involved in managing and supporting learners' workplace training.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 2

40. NRC has very good strategies to widen participation and promote equality and diversity. A member of staff has clearly defined responsibilities for equality of opportunity across all aspects of NRC's activities. All staff receive accredited training in equality and diversity and have a good understanding of their responsibilities to promote the topic. Very good use is made of data to monitor enquiries, applications, enrolment, success and progression into employment. Marketing and learning materials are regularly reviewed to

ensure that they promote equality and avoid gender stereotypes in the industry.

41. There is a strong culture and ethos of widening participation, particularly through recruitment from more disadvantaged inner-city areas. Non-riders and learners who exceed the industry weight limit are recruited and opportunities are sought for them in the industry. Considerable efforts are made to recruit learners from minority ethnic groups, currently under-represented in the industry. Although numbers recruited are low they are currently higher than the industry average on the full-time level 1 course and on apprenticeships. A high level of support and protection is provided for all resident learners, especially those identified as being more vulnerable. Quality assurance officers carefully monitor equality of opportunity in the workplace for apprentices. When problems arise they are investigated and dealt with quickly. Apprentices are not sent to employers that have a poor history of equality of opportunity.

42. There is an effective complaints procedure which is rigorously applied. The relatively few complaints received are dealt with quickly and appropriate action is taken. Equality of opportunity and bullying and harassment procedures are in place and these are regularly reviewed and updated.

43. All learners receive well-structured training in equality of opportunity and this is reinforced at several stages throughout the programmes. A brief introduction at the induction to the full-time course is followed by lessons covering legislation and bullying and harassment. This is supplemented by clear information in the learners' handbook. Further information is given to apprentices during the workplace induction and at reviews. Learners have a satisfactory understanding of their rights and responsibilities. However, the language in some of the training material and displays is too complex for level 1 learners.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 1

44. There are comprehensive and effective strategies to improve the quality of provision. A detailed, regularly reviewed quality assurance manual covers all aspects of the learning process. Responsibilities for quality improvement are clearly defined for all staff. Training in quality improvement procedures is thorough and staff are clear about their roles. A rigorous audit system ensures that procedures are applied consistently. Audit reports are detailed and give good feedback to staff on the quality of outcomes in addition to confirming compliance with procedures. Very good use is made of the regular feedback gained from learners, employers and staff. For example, the amount of riding tuition on the full-time level 1 programme has been increased following feedback from learners and employers. Sharing of good practice in teaching and learning and assessment practice takes place at monthly quality improvement meetings. Success rates and progression to employment from the level 1 programme are consistently high. Success rates on work-based learning programmes have increased steadily in the past three years. Retention is now particularly high.

45. There is a comprehensive system of observation and feedback on all aspects of the learning programmes provided by NRC. This includes observation of induction sessions, lessons at NRC, assessments and progress reviews. All staff are observed twice a year, and new staff are observed more frequently. Staff value the constructive and detailed feedback given and clearly identify improvements they have subsequently made to their work with learners. Grading of lessons does not accurately reflect the written feedback in a minority of observation records. Observation of learning provided by workplace mentors is carried

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out. NRC recognises that in focusing on strengths in feedback to encourage mentors, insufficient attention is sometimes paid to identifying areas for improvement.

46. Self-assessment is rigorous and accurate. All staff are consulted during the process. Very good use is made of performance data and feedback from learners and employers to support judgements. Strengths and areas for improvement are clearly identified, although the effect of some strengths is underestimated. A detailed action plan is carefully implemented and regularly reviewed. NRC has made good progress in further developing strengths and dealing with weaknesses identified through self-assessment.

47. Internal verification is systematic and sufficiently rigorous. Action points identified by external verifiers are quickly dealt with. NRC recognises the need for additional qualified internal verifiers and is training more staff for this role.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Agriculture, horticulture and animal care

Grade 1

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Equine		1
Apprenticeships for young people	82	2
Other government-funded provision	24	1

48. The NRC offers training towards NVQ at level 1 in horse care and level 2 in racehorse care and NVQ at level 3 in racehorse care and management. Learners are recruited nationally through Connexions, careers advice days, taster days at the NRC, advertisements in specialist magazines and the NRC'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. Exemption is given to some learners for attendance at the 10-week course due to their assessed level of ability with horses.

49. The 10-week preparation course known as the front-end course has on average 100 attendees in a year. At the time of inspection, 11 are attending the second week of their course and 13 the eighth week. The aim of this course is to teach learners the basic principles of horse care before employment in the horse racing industry and to achieve an NVQ at level 1 in horse care. Key skills at level 1 and numeracy and literacy if required are also taught. Most of the learners progress to work-based learning. A further two weeks are used as an induction period for the work-based learning programme. During these two weeks the aim is to achieve 30 per cent of the NVQ at level 2 in racehorse care. This will depend on their progress and previous experience. Assessors visit the learners every 10 weeks in the workplace to complete the remaining units of the NVQ. Apprentices are working in 47 flat and national hunt horse training yards across the country. Work-based learners are also given the opportunity to attend NRC for additional training, usually for one week. In 2005, 14 advanced apprentices and 29 apprentices took advantage of this additional training in order to complete their frameworks.

Equine

Strengths

- outstanding achievement and progression on the college programme
- excellent riding tuition
- very good development of skills in preparation for employment
- high standard of welfare and care
- good management of training for NRC programmes
- good development of vocational skills in the workplace
- very good awareness of progress towards framework completion by learners
- effective guidance for work-based learners
- good retention rates and improving framework completion rates

Weaknesses

- weak records of assessment
- insufficient planning of on-the-job training

Achievement and standards

50. Achievement of the NVQ at level 1 is outstanding. Since 2001-02 the achievement rate has been consistently at 90 per cent with an average of over 100 learners each year. Ninety-three per cent of learners in 2005 have progressed into paid employment. Key skills achievement is steadily improving, from 54 per cent in 2003 to 69 per cent in 2005.

51. The work-based learning success rate is satisfactory and improving overall. In 2003-04, of the 12 advanced apprentices, four have completed the full framework and six achieved the NVQ at level 3. In 2004-05, of the 11 learners, three have achieved the NVQ at level 3, two have completed the full framework and four are still in learning. For 2005-06, all 12 advanced apprentices are still in learning. For 2003-04, of the 75 apprentices, 52 per cent have completed their framework. For 2004-05, of the 50 apprentices, 20 have completed the framework and 12 are still in learning. For 2005-06, of the 59 apprentices recruited two have completed the framework and 54 are still in learning. Retention has consistently improved in the past three years and for those recruited this year, 100 per cent of advanced apprentices and 92 per cent of apprentices have been retained.

52. Learners who attend the front-end course are very successfully prepared for moving into employment. All learners who achieve the NVQ at level 1 and who wish to work in the racing industry are guaranteed employment. The timetable for activity at NRC is totally realistic. Learners attend promptly at the start of the day and continue through until evening stable duties are finished. Weekend work is also included on a rota basis which gives learners a realistic idea of what working in the horseracing industry will involve. Learners are able to develop the skills needed, which demands hard work, long hours, commitment and fitness. Very clear targets are given to learners to enable them to learn to work to industry standards and at commercial speeds. Learners are aware of the progress they have made and are justifiably proud of their achievements. Excellent attention is paid to the development of good riding skills and learners become competent and stylish riders.

53. In the workplace the opportunities for learners to develop vocational skills are good. Many learners are able to competently build on the skills obtained from the front-end course at NRC. Learners are showing rapid progress in their ability to ride and are enthusiastic about their learning. Learners frequently have the opportunity to ride fit racehorses during work activities, including fast work on the gallops. If there is an identified shortfall in a practical skill, such as lunging a horse, learners are able to take advantage of the opportunity to return to the NRC for specific training and assessment. The attendance at NRC is flexible and is arranged according to employers' and learners' needs. This flexibility is appreciated by employers. In some cases, workplace supervisors gain permission from the trainer for the learner to carry out activities that are not normally done. For example, activities include the opportunity to continue to look after a horse that needs bandaging until learners are competent at the task.

SOUTH YORKSHIRE TRAINING TRUST (NORTHERN RACING COLLEGE)

Programme	End Year	Success Rate	No, of learners	Provider NVQ Rate	National NVQ Rate	Provider framework rate	National framework rate
Advanced Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	12	50	78	33	43
		timely	8	13	64	0	33
	2004-05	overall	11	45	61	27	40
		timely	12	42	53	25	36
Apprenticeships	2003-04	overall	57	55	76	38	61
		timely	44	14	64	7	54
	2004-05	overall	78	64	75	52	66
		timely	84	45	67	34	59

For details of how to calculate overall and timely success rates please refer to the "Quality Improvement Pack" (available from the Learning and Skills Council's website: www.lsc.gov.uk).

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

Other government funded																
Other government-funded provision	2005-06		2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	107	100	90	100	111	100	91	100	88	100	132	100				
Retained*	74	69	84	93	104	94	88	97	85	97	119	90				
Successfully completed	72	67	81	90	100	90	83	91	79	90	105	80				
Still in training	29	27	0	0	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

54. The teaching of riding at NRC is excellent. There is outstanding team teaching during riding tuition. One instructor manages a class of at least 10 horses and riders, and a second allows effective individual attention to be given to ensure that the learners' ability increases. Learners who are in the second week of their course are showing competence in rising to the trot after 10 days of instruction. The standard of health and safety is very high, particularly when using the gallops. Modern technology in the form of wireless headphones is effectively used so that instructors can give clear instructions to riders. Instructors are used as pacemakers so that learners rapidly learn the correct speeds at which to canter and gallop a horse and to give examples of how to ride correctly. This rapid development of riding skills is supported by very good teaching on the simulator. Learners are able to practise the correct canter position and shortening of reins before actually cantering a horse. Those who are non-riders are also given the opportunity to gain riding skills by using the simulator.

55. Work-based learners are fully aware of their progress. Progress towards achievement of the NVQ is measured by the percentage of elements achieved. Learners are proud to state their achievement and are motivated to achieve the work identified during their progress review. Learners are fully aware of what aspects that they need to work on until

the next review. Individual learning plans are detailed and provide learners with clear targets to achieve their qualifications. Learners are clearly able to state when they intend to achieve and often this is ahead of the identified target. Occasionally it is identified that progress is slow and quality assurance officers deal with additional needs.

56. There is a good range of resources in the racing establishments used by learners. The better-equipped yards have access to horse walkers, all-weather gallops, solariums and indoor riding schools. Learners value the quality of the yards they are working in and are rapidly able to gain the skills needed to handle horses using specialised items of equipment. Work placements are well matched to the requirements of the learners. NRC gives employers a realistic assessment of the learners' skills, but sometimes this is not detailed. Working relationships with employers are excellent and very supportive. NRC is praised by employers for their help, specifically relating to the preparation of learners on the college course. The attention to health and safety is extended to the workplace and reinforced with the learner at the start of their work on the yard. Work placements which are found to be unsuitable are not used by NRC.

57. Learners in the workplace are effectively reviewed every 10 weeks. The record of reviews is comprehensive and includes details on health and safety, equality of opportunity, progress in the stable yard and on-the-job training. Learners value the time taken to discuss their progress and to ensure that targets are able to be met. Workplace supervisors are involved in the review and are clearly able to discuss their learners' progress since the previous meeting. Areas of concern are noted and appropriate action is taken. There is insufficient detail on specific tasks in the review process and the records do not always clearly identify when the work needs to be completed, but this does not restrict the learners' progress. Reviews of progress are carried out every two weeks at NRC and they are good. Learners are given targets, but they are not specific or measurable.

58. The standard of welfare and care at the college is very high. Many learners are living away from home for the first time. The standard of the residential accommodation is good with a trained residential supervisor on duty 24 hours. A detailed learner handbook which is written in an appropriate level of language is used effectively to give guidance on the requirements for the front-end course and details of local external agencies. All staff at the college are willing and able to help learners in any aspect of their training and personal development. Learners are confident enough to ask for help at any time. Free passes to a large sporting complex in Doncaster are well used and appreciated by learners for recreational activities. The nutritional welfare of learners is closely monitored. Staff work hard to ensure that learners are placed in yards which are appropriate to their skills and needs.

59. Assessment and verification in the workplace are satisfactory. Three quality assurance officers carry out assessments. They have good questioning skills, are able to ask questions at the appropriate level and to cover the range required. Feedback is clear and encouraging and clearly indicates the areas for improvement. Assessors are observant and fully competent with the occupational standards. Internal verification is constructively critical and helps to identify aspects the assessor needs to improve. Assessment is flexible and is planned to meet the needs of the learner. The assessment of practical skills is mostly by observation and the results are detailed. However, the assessment of background knowledge varies and at level 2 there is little recognition or use of generated evidence in the portfolio. Although the portfolios contain witness testimony, background knowledge

questions and photographs, they are not always used to plan assessments. The level 3 portfolios show excellent use of witness testimony that is clearly linked to the occupational standards.

60. Assessment at NRC is thorough and frequent. Learners clearly know when they are going to be assessed and in what subject. Feedback is appropriate and clearly identifies what needs to be improved. Although the assessor team members talk daily about individual progress, the records that are kept on assessment are not detailed. There is no record of the actual date when a particular aspect of a unit was assessed or of the questions that were used to confirm the learner's understanding. It is difficult to identify why and when a learner has been referred and what action needs to be taken.

61. Training in the workplace is not well planned. Development of practical skills and knowledge is mostly driven by the learner. When a learner identifies the need to gain further experience or skill, the workplace supervisor is requested to demonstrate. The development of learners' knowledge and understanding is not checked or recorded by the workplace supervisor.

Leadership and management

62. The management of the front-end course is good. Standard schemes of work and lesson plans have been produced and identify the resources needed. Lesson plans also effectively include differentiation. For example, when learning markings on a horse there are three different methods by which this is done according to learners' literacy and numeracy level. Some aims and objectives in the lesson plans are not particularly clear. A basic skills/key skills tutor has been appointed in the past six months and good development and progress has been made. Some aspects of basic skills are not contextualised to the horse industry and some learners are not sure of the relevance. There is a structured process of exemption from the front-end course. All training staff are from the racing industry and are working towards teaching qualifications. There is a strong emphasis on the need to improve and move the quality of teaching and training forward. The self-assessment process is fully understood by all staff and is effective in driving forward improvement.

63. Although work-based mentors have been identified, the system is not fully developed. They provide learners with ongoing support in the workplace. Many have achieved NVQs themselves, but the system is insufficiently promoted. Some mentors have a poor understanding of the NVQ process. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Knowledge is checked and updated at each review and learners know where to seek help should it be required.

