

Harrogate Training Services

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 52135

Name of lead inspector: Dr Pamela Blackman HMI

Last day of inspection: 23 July 2010

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

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Information about the provider

1. Harrogate Training Services (HTS) was part of Harrogate Borough Council until 1992, when it became a private training provider. Fourteen members of staff work at HTS, ten full time and four part time. HTS has moved to new premises since the previous inspection. The training centre is located very close to Harrogate town centre.
2. HTS currently trains 72 apprentices, of which 64 are on childcare programmes, two are on retail programmes and six are on business administration. Of those trainees on childcare programmes, 40% are aged 16 to 18 and the rest are adults. All but three learners are White British. Very few are male and 97.2% of apprentices have employed status. HTS delivers a small Entry To Employment (E2E) contract with a focus on increasing learners' vocational skills, employability skills, and literacy and numeracy.
3. The unemployment rate in Harrogate is currently 2.1% against a Yorkshire and Humber rate of 4.8% and a national rate of 4.1%. According to the 2001 census, 1.6% of the population of Harrogate are from minority ethnic backgrounds, compared with a national average of 9.1. In 2009, 59% of pupils in North Yorkshire achieved five or more GCSEs at grade C or above, compared with a national average of 48%.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2009/10
Employer provision: Apprenticeships	64 apprentices

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 3
Capacity to improve	Grade 3
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	2
Quality of provision	3
Leadership and management	3
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	3
Subject areas	Grade
Children's care, learning and development	3

Overall effectiveness

- The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Managers provide sound strategic direction and leadership, and good value for money. HTS has implemented a number of improvements since the last inspection. Overall outcomes for learners are good but progress for many learners remains slow. Staff work well with employers to provide satisfactory training at work that effectively meets the needs of learners and employers. Arrangements to safeguard learners are good. Learners feel safe and protected from abuse. HTS satisfactorily promotes equality and diversity and has some good initiatives to sustainably manage resources.

Main findings

- Overall outcomes for learners are good. Learners achieve their learning goals well. The overall success rate is high, much higher than the national average. In the current year, timely achievement for apprentices, though still low, shows a good improvement on last year.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Assessors provide satisfactory and frequent coaching and assessment in the workplace. However, there is an over reliance on written evidence and often the development of theory is split from

practice. Attendance at off-the-job training sessions is low. Support for literacy and numeracy is underdeveloped.

7. Progress reviews are frequent. Their scope is limited and does not consistently involve employers or sufficiently focus on developing learners' professional practice.
8. The range of programmes provided satisfactorily meets the needs and interests of learners and employers. Progression routes are clear between levels 2 and 3.
9. HTS uses partnership arrangements effectively to develop the provision and works with a wide-range of employers. The involvement of employers in the training of learners is too dependent on individual commitment. Formal contractual arrangements governing the obligations of employers need strengthening.
10. HTS provides satisfactory personal and social support to learners. The provision of information, advice and guidance is satisfactory for learners studying up to level 3 but underdeveloped at higher levels.
11. Managers satisfactorily create and sustain a supportive culture throughout the organisation and effectively raise learners' ambitions. They develop the strategic vision cooperatively with learners, employers and staff and successfully share it across the organisation.
12. Arrangements for safeguarding learners are good. HTS creates a very safe learning environment. Learners feel very safe and protected from bullying and harassment. They clearly understand their rights and responsibilities. Good actions have been taken to safeguard learners. Appropriate referrals are made when necessary.
13. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place. Strategies to increase the recruitment of a wider-range of learners, including increasing males into childcare programmes, are not yet having an impact.
14. Quality improvement plans are clear and effectively linked to strategic objectives. They provide an accurate picture of progress towards addressing issues identified through self-assessment but many actions arising from the plans are yet to have an impact. The collection and analysis of employers' and learner's views are underdeveloped.
15. HTS provides good value for money. Overall success rates are high and show an improving trend. Financial health is good. Improvements have been made to the accommodation.

What does Harrogate Training Services need to do to improve further?

- Improve timely success rates through improved learning support, especially for literacy and numeracy and using better qualified staff to deliver key skills.
- Improve training and assessment by increasing the variety of approaches used, improving the attendance of apprentices in the off-the-job training opportunities, closing the gap between theory and practice and improving feedback on assessment.
- Broaden the scope of progress reviews to increase the involvement of employers and to take more account of learners' personal and work-related development.
- Further develop employer engagement in learners' training by introducing a clear and robust contractual agreement between HTS and each employer.
- Develop opportunities for employers and learners to provide feedback, and analyse their views more clearly in order to bring about improvements.
- Continue to develop equality and diversity initiatives, which are designed to increase the recruitment of different groups of learners, including increasing the numbers of males taking childcare programmes.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- the hands-on working they get with children
- the help they receive from their assessors
- on-the-job training
- the regular visiting they get from their assessors
- completing the technical certificate
- the one-to-one coaching they receive from supportive assessors.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the frequency of observations of their work
- more guidance with maths
- the provision of training sessions at work
- more off-the-job workshops and training
- the explanations of what the programme entails and how National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) work
- feedback on their work to be provided in quieter places in the nursery to help concentration.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What employers like:

- how flexible HTS is over learners' attendance at training
- the good communication with assessors
- supportive approach by all HTS staff
- that assessors work hard to help learners' understanding
- that assessors do not get in the way of nursery routines when they visit.

What employers would like to see improved:

- the length of time for learners to achieve their qualification, which is too long
- the level of knowledge of level 3 learners
- the development of English and maths in a more vocationally relevant way
- better links between theory and practice
- better consolidation of learning before learners can progress from level 2 to level 3
- more training sessions
- the provision of some courses on Saturdays so learners can attend in their own time.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

16. HTS has a satisfactory capacity to make and sustain improvement. The company has made several improvements since the last inspection, including a move to a new premises. The business plan is effectively supported by the quality improvement plan, which is sufficiently thorough and supports the company's strategies well. The collection, analysis and use of employer and learner feedback is underdeveloped.
17. Overall success rates are high and have improved since the last inspection. Historically, learners make slow progress. HTS has developed strategies to improve this and they are now having a positive impact. Value for money is good. Learner numbers have grown with the introduction of an E2E contract and the extra funding is being used to develop the provision.
18. Self-assessment forms an integral part of the quality assurance process. Staff are fully involved in the process and are familiar with the key judgements. Learners and employers are appropriately involved. Inspectors agree with most of the key judgements, however, many areas judged as satisfactory at the last inspection have remained so.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

19. The overall success rate for all apprenticeships is high. In 2008/09, the rate was 88% which is well above the national average. The rate has improved in the past three years. There is no difference in the success rates for different groups of learners. Data for the current year indicate the success rate will remain high. However, progress is slow, especially on advanced apprenticeships. This year so far, nearly 30% of advanced apprentices have failed to complete their framework in the allotted time. Progress is especially slow in key skills work, particularly in application of number. Strategies are being implemented to improve progress, including the introduction of more frequent reviews with learners. They are beginning to have a positive impact.
20. The standard of learners' written work is satisfactory. Learners' occupational, personal and social skills are of a satisfactory standard. Learners relate to other members of staff, parents and each other appropriately. They are aware of, and respect basic differences in spiritual and cultural practices. Learners' understanding of their rights and responsibilities at work is satisfactory. They have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of basic health principles and are able to make informed choices about their own health and well-being. Learners employ safe working practices and have a good understanding of e-safety. Learners say they feel safe at work.

21. Attendance at off-the-job training is very low. HTS has not been successful in securing an agreement with employers to release learners sufficiently frequently for training.

The quality of provision

Grade 3

22. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Training sessions are planned well but occasionally suffer from interruptions, which affect learners' concentration. Learners behave well but do not ask many questions, and questioning from the teacher to check learning is insufficient. The range of teaching methods used lacks sufficient variety but is adequate to achieve the planned learning outcomes. Learning and the demonstration of understanding are good for those learners who attend training sessions regularly but this is the minority of learners. When carrying out individual coaching, assessors do not always give learners adequate time to reflect and respond before answering the questions for them. Learning technology is used satisfactorily in the training sessions but it is not used enough to aid learning at other times.
23. Assessment practice is satisfactory. A particular strength is its flexibility to meet the needs of learners and employers. Assessment planning is clear and undertaken frequently every four weeks with learners. HTS informs employers about learners' progress but does not involve them sufficiently in the review process. Planning is satisfactory. It is usually focused suitably on the assessment of specific NVQ units. However, it sometimes lacks sufficient consideration of individual learner's needs. The range of assessment methods used is satisfactory. There is an over-reliance on written evidence and not enough on direct observation. Many learners struggle to link theory and practice. Assessors provide clear evidence of learners' performance. However, their feedback to learners is overly descriptive. It does not fully identify where competence is or is not achieved and how to improve.
24. The identification of individual learning needs is underdeveloped and insufficient help is provided to develop learners' literacy and numeracy skills. These weaknesses inhibit the progress of many learners and slow the completion of their apprenticeship frameworks. Whilst trainers and assessors are suitably qualified vocationally, none hold a qualification in the teaching of key skills or Skills for Life.
25. The four weekly reviews held with learners provide regular feedback on their progress. They are overly mechanistic and do not focus sufficiently on developing learners' professional practice. The reviews do not focus enough on what has been learned since the last review. Equality and diversity issues are discussed but this discussion is not always suitably challenging.
26. The range of provision is satisfactory. Progression routes are clear. Most learners have the opportunity to attend additional training such as first aid, food hygiene, and health and safety arranged by the employers.

27. Effective links have been developed between HTS and schools and community groups. HTS' engagement with employers is satisfactory. Some good examples of very positive employer engagement have resulted in learners being well supported and achieving well. However, the level of involvement of employers is too dependent on individual commitment and in some cases, this is insufficient. Contractual arrangements need strengthening between HTS and each employer, setting out clearly what is expected. Work is needed to develop formal professional relationships that enable more coordinated training.
28. Individual care and support for learners are satisfactory. Learners' welfare is well attended to. Sometimes the impulse to care overrides the discipline that is required to promote learners' progress. Learners and assessors have established good relationships. Information, advice and guidance are satisfactory for learners studying at levels up to level 3. Beyond this, they are often too basic or not available.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

29. Managers and staff at HTS satisfactorily create and sustain a supportive culture throughout the organisation and effectively raise learners' ambitions. Managers develop the strategic vision cooperatively with learners, employers and staff, and successfully share it across the organisation. Realistic targets are set with staff and learners alike. Quality improvement plans are clear and closely linked to strategic objectives. They provide an accurate picture of the progress made in addressing the issues identified in the self-assessment report. However, many actions arising from the plans are yet to have an impact.
30. Staff are deployed well, and communication across the organisation is good. Staff are vocationally well qualified and have sufficient opportunities to develop, including the achievement of qualified teacher status. HTS has very effective links across the region, which it uses well to plan and revise its provision.
31. Safeguarding arrangements are good and ensure learners are in a safe environment. HTS prioritises safeguarding and e-safety effectively across the organisation. A comprehensive policy is in place, which HTS reviews regularly. The designated officer and staff have undertaken appropriate training. HTS has made good links with a wide range of organisations, including the local safeguarding children's board. Vulnerable learners are involved appropriately in their own safeguarding arrangements. HTS has made appropriate referrals when necessary. Records indicate all staff have been suitably vetted and appropriate checks undertaken. While all employed learners have the necessary CRB checks in place, HTS does not routinely monitor that this is so with employers.
32. The promotion of equality and diversity and its understanding by learners are satisfactory. HTS uses data satisfactorily to monitor and analyse the recruitment and progress of learners. There are no differences between the achievement of different groups of learners. HTS has set some challenging targets, for

example, to increase the number of males on the programme, the strategies to achieve this have yet to make an impact.

33. HTS engages users, employers and others satisfactorily to promote improvement. It seeks feedback from employers annually through its employer forum and from learners through its annual survey. The analysis of this survey is cumbersome and does not clearly identify key areas for improvement. Other ways of seeking learners' views are not undertaken systematically. Learners' suggestions to improve the IT equipment and provide an interactive white board have been implemented. HTS seeks the views of a wide range of groups including Connexions, local schools and colleges, local community and health groups to inform improvements. The self-assessment process is inclusive. Its outcomes are largely accurate and are used well to drive improvements.
34. HTS is in good financial health and provides good value for money. It reinvests a substantial proportion of its profits annually to make improvements to the training facility and for resources for staff. Overall success rates are high and many learners progress onto higher qualifications. Learning resources are satisfactory and some are very good. They are used effectively to support learning. HTS has developed some good initiatives in relation to sustainability, including the deployment of assessors in regions and the development of a recycling policy.

Information about the inspection

35. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's centre manager as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) the previous inspection report, data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection, and feedback from learners and employers.
36. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, and reviewed learners' written work. They looked at questionnaires learners and employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Harrogate Training Services

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate	Overall	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners		
Full-time learners	64	64
Part-time learners	0	0
Overall effectiveness	3	3
Capacity to improve	3	
A. Outcomes for learners	2	2
A1. How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	2	
A1.a) How well do learners attain their learning goals?	2	
A1.b) How well do learners progress?	3	
A2. How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	3	
A3. How safe do learners feel?	2	
A4. Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	3	
A5. How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	N/A	
B. Quality of provision	3	3
B1. How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	3	
B2. How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	3	
B3 How well do partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	3	
B4. How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	3	
C. Leadership and management	3	3
C1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	3	
C2. How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	N/A	
C3. How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2	
C4. How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	3	
C5. How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	3	
C6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3	
C7. How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	2	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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