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Air Vice Marshall Mark Green
Air Officer Commanding No. 22 Training Group
No. 22 Training Group
Room 22, Hunter Block 1 Site
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Dear Air Vice Marshall Green

Ofsted 2010–11 survey inspection programme: numeracy – tackling the challenge of ensuring that young people and adults gain the numeracy skills they need for their careers and personal lives

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 23 and 29 July 2010, and 7 and 8 September 2010 to look at your work in numeracy.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: visits to the Royal Air Force (RAF) Air Command, an RAF careers recruiting office and two RAF bases; interviews with staff, learners and potential recruits; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of learners' work and observations of five learning sessions.

Overall, The Royal Air Force is good at tackling the challenge of ensuring that young people and adults gain the numeracy skills they need for their careers and personal lives.

Key findings

- The RAF regards numeracy skills as a strategic priority in the development of its staff. Developing these skills forms an appropriate element of recruitment and training for recruits to the service, as part of their initial training and of their subsequent development as apprentices. The recruitment process involves carefully designed initial assessments of the recruits' numeracy skills including number-related problem-solving skills.
- Senior officers promote the importance of numeracy effectively to all operational staff and they manage the numeracy provision well. Good

numeracy skills are an important element in helping all airmen and women make correct and rapid decisions in fast moving and often hostile environments. The RAF is making good progress in implementing its plans to introduce functional skills at an appropriate level for all trainees over the next year.

- Training programmes are effective. Teaching staff use the results of comprehensive diagnostic assessment well to plan learning programmes and individual support. Staff monitor trainees' progress in numeracy very closely. Managers have identified the delay in providing effective individual support in numeracy and they plan to improve this as part of the forthcoming introduction of functional skills.
- The teaching and learning sessions observed were good. Trainees were well motivated and they often saw an immediate vocational relevance to the numeracy skills they were learning. Theory lessons, covering skills such as how to measure an angle and hence find a compass bearing, often precede practical exercises out in the field that test and reinforce these new skills. Instructors struck a good balance between their role as leaders and the way they helped their trainees to learn. In a small number of cases, the tasks and learning activities did not engage or challenge individual trainees sufficiently.
- Resources and materials to support teaching and learning in numeracy are generally good. Teachers often produce their own resources, but they do not make sufficient use of the wide range of teaching resources and guidance that are available through national organisations supporting the development of numeracy provision.
- Staff use information and communication technology (ICT) resources well for the assessment of trainees' numeracy skills. The RAF does not use ICT enough as a teaching and learning resource. Trainees do not have sufficient access to computers outside their lessons.
- Success rates on apprenticeship programmes and key skills are good. Trainees develop good numeracy skills that they use well in practical situations. They are very appreciative of the individual support they receive and feel that they make good progress in developing their numeracy skills.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that staff teaching numeracy make greater use of the resources and guidance available from external specialist organisations to help ensure that teaching and learning activities fully challenge and engage all learners
- ensuring more accessible and effective use of ICT to support learning, perhaps by developing a virtual learning environment for numeracy, to provide more opportunities for trainees to learn independently and to practice their skills outside their lesson.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop numeracy in the Royal Air Force.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to the Skills Funding Agency and will be published on the Ofsted website under the URN for your organisation. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Wilf Hudson
Her Majesty's Inspector