

QinetiQ Limited (Apprenticeship Training School)

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 54026

Name of lead inspector: Neil Edwards HMI

Last day of inspection: 3 February 2012

Type of provider: Employer

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Information about the provider

1. QinetiQ Limited, Apprenticeship Training School, (QinetiQ) is an international company providing technology-based services and solutions to defence and security organisations worldwide. QinetiQ is based at Boscombe Down, Wiltshire and supports the Ministry of Defence (MoD) by performing flight trials of new aircraft, airborne equipment and weapons to assess safety and suitability.
2. QinetiQ offers advanced engineering apprenticeships funded through the Skills Funding Agency. Most apprentices are employed by QinetiQ while eight learners are employed directly by the MoD. The apprenticeship has four pathways: mechanical aeronautical; avionic aeronautical; mechanical engineering; and electrical engineering. Learners on the aeronautical pathways start with QinetiQ each September for a four-year apprenticeship, while learners on the mechanical and electrical pathways complete a three-year apprenticeship. All apprentices spend their final year on placement in the workplace or in the squadron hangars.
3. Initial training takes place in the apprentice training school (the training centre) at Boscombe Down. Operational management of the apprenticeship is the responsibility of the training centre manager, who is supported by the training quality manager, 16 tutors and a small administration team. Learners are recruited from all over the country. To gain a place on the apprenticeship they are required to have achieved at least five GCSEs at grade C or above, including mathematics, English and science. At the time of inspection there were 102 apprentices, 6 of whom were female.

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2010/11
Employer provision: Apprenticeships	102 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 2
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Capacity to improve	Grade 2
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	Grade
Outcomes for learners	1
Quality of provision	2
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	2
Equality and diversity	2

Subject Areas	
Engineering	2

Overall effectiveness

4. Learners enjoy their apprenticeship at QinetiQ and almost all achieve their learning goals. They make outstanding progress on their course and most obtain full-time employment once they complete. Learners develop particularly good engineering and personal skills, such as communication and increased confidence. Health and safety are rigorously reinforced. Learners feel safe at the training centre and in their work placements.
5. Teaching, learning and assessment are good overall. Practical lessons and training in the workplace are good, providing a varied and exciting range of activities which keep learners interested. However, theory lessons are sometimes lacklustre and not all tutors ensure that those learners who are more able are suitably challenged and participating well. Training and assessments in the workplace are well planned, taking care to ensure learners gain a mix of experiences using the many outstanding high-tech resources, and access assessments promptly. The many good partnerships with external organisations benefit learners, who make an outstanding contribution to the local community through a wide range of projects. Managers and staff understand their learners' needs well and provide learners with good support, advice and guidance.
6. QinetiQ's management of the provision is good and managers have made many changes to improve the learning experience. Significant financial investment in

resources helps to improve learners' practical skills. Arrangements for safeguarding and equality and diversity are good and there is a strong culture of respect and care for learners. QinetiQ has increased the number of female learners on their engineering apprenticeships through positive marketing with local schools. Self-assessment is generally satisfactory, and the use of data is good. Quality improvement arrangements have generally been successful in identifying areas to improve. However, managers are aware that more needs to be done to ensure these arrangements are developed further.

Main findings

- Success rates across all programmes are outstanding and progress into full employment on completion is exceptionally high. Learners make outstanding progress while on their course.
- The development of learners' vocational, workplace and personal skills is particularly good, as is their understanding of health and safety. Learners have increased confidence in dealing with a wide range of difficult and complex work.
- Practical training is good and well planned, although theory teaching is sometimes boring and insufficiently challenging for the more able learners. Tutors make particularly effective use of the excellent range of high-quality resources in work placements to further develop learners' competences.
- The range of community project work to complement the training programmes is especially good and learners develop additional practical skills as well as good project management and team working.
- Care, guidance and support are good. Learners value the mix of formal and informal support from staff at the training centre and in the workplace. Tutors and assessors monitor progress closely and keep parents/guardians and work-based supervisors well informed.
- QinetiQ has made significant improvements and investment to improve resources and facilities, which are outstanding for on-the-job training and assessment.
- The development of partnership working is strong and mutually productive. The company has established good links with local schools to attract more young women into engineering careers.
- Arrangements for safeguarding have been improved considerably and are strong. Staff are well trained and have good awareness of the potential issues around safeguarding. All learners have good access to a wide range of confidential help and support.
- QinetiQ promotes equality and diversity well. Topics are thoroughly discussed at induction and reinforced both for staff and learners through regular training sessions held throughout the year.
- Quality assurance arrangements are satisfactory overall, although some are new and insufficiently refined and others not systematically monitored. Self-assessment is satisfactory.

- Value for money is outstanding. All learners complete their programme successfully and benefit from access to a wide range of very high-quality resources.

What does QinetiQ Limited (Apprenticeship Training School) need to do to improve further?

- Improve the use and application of a wider range of teaching materials and learning strategies in theory lessons to provide sufficient support and challenge for all learners, in particular those who are more able.
- Increase the rigour and effectiveness of quality assurance arrangements to evaluate current performance more accurately and inform continuous improvement.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- being able to learn in a practical environment while earning money
- the opportunity to work within a high-tech company
- the support and care provided by staff and workplace supervisors
- the quality of training resources and expertise
- the friendly, supportive and knowledgeable staff
- the flexible arrangements for assessment
- the good opportunity for future career development.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the quality and currency of handouts for theory classes
- access to computers for emails when working in the squadron aircraft hangars.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What managers and work-based supervisors like:

- the excellent communication with staff from the training centre
- the opportunity to pass on highly specialist knowledge and skills to apprentices.

What managers and work-based supervisors would like to see improved:

- none reported.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

7. Outcomes are outstanding and QinetiQ has further improved the high success rates identified at the previous inspection. Current learners make outstanding progress and develop good vocational and personal skills. The provider takes care to ensure that the number of apprentices recruited will not exceed the potential employment opportunities once they complete. Almost all learners get full-time work once they finish their apprenticeship.
8. The provider has made good progress in addressing issues identified at the last inspection. It has continued to improve the programmes to better meet the needs of learners and the requirements of the workplace, refurbished the learning accommodation, and increased resources significantly. Safeguarding arrangements and equality and diversity have been improved and are good. Managers and staff analyse and use data well. QinetiQ has developed and introduced many quality improvement arrangements, although some are not fully implemented and others not effectively monitored. However, improvements that benefit learners have been successful. The self-assessment is satisfactory, and the quality improvement plan recognises most areas for improvements identified during the inspection.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 1

9. Outcomes for learners are outstanding. In 2007/08 and again in 2008/09, all learners successfully achieved their apprenticeship. In 2009/10, 28 out of 29 learners completed successfully. In the last three years, all learners, apart from one, have gained full-time employment upon completing their apprenticeship. Progress is outstanding and learners develop quickly and complete within time. Some learners finish their qualifications before the end of their apprenticeship. They complete the work placement in the final year to hone their skills further and demonstrate their abilities to their future employer.
10. Attendance is good. Fingerprint recognition is used in the training centre to register attendance and punctuality, which replicates and encourages good industry practices. Learners feel safe both at work and in the centre, and they have a clear understanding of the vital importance of health and safety, especially in an aeronautical environment. Staff promote personal safety particularly well throughout the apprenticeship.
11. Learners enjoy their learning and develop good engineering and personal skills. They develop their skills in using hand tools and engineering equipment well in the training centre and are confident in their abilities. They display high levels of initiative and self-reliance when on work placements and many exhibit good team working skills. The standard of learners' work is good.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

12. Teaching, learning and assessment are good overall. Practical teaching and training, both in the training centre and in the workplace, are particularly good with effective use made of the many outstanding resources. Learners who have a work placement in the squadron hangars, for example, have the opportunity to work on a wide variety of military and commercial aircraft. They complete maintenance and repair, and also make aircraft adaptations for test and research. Learners working in other placements are able to work on an array of military weapons as well as completing research projects. Learners are interested, involved and proudly take responsibility for their work. The highly qualified staff and work-based supervisors use their experience well to develop and enhance learners' knowledge and skills in the practical environment. However, some theory lessons are dull and uninspiring. Not all tutors plan a stimulating variety of activities or make good use of information and communication technology to ensure all learners are suitably challenged, in particular those who are more able.
13. Initial assessment is thorough and all prospective apprentices are required to have achieved a minimum GCSE requirement, although most achieve considerably better grades. All learners complete a pre-course mathematics test and practical skills assessment as well as undertaking full security clearance. Well-planned assessments take full account of when aircraft maintenance schedules and projects are likely to be available. Learners' portfolios are satisfactory and include appropriate use of witness testimonies.
14. Progress reviews are satisfactory. Assessors review learners' progress regularly in the training centre and during their frequent visits to the workplace. Learners know what progress they are making and assessors set realistic actions for them to take by the next visit. However, the recording of targets in reviews and individual learning plans varies in quality between assessors, with some targets not sufficiently individualised.
15. The provider has developed good partnerships in the community that benefit learners. Learners' participation in community projects is outstanding. Such projects include the design and construction of several sculptures for a nearby park and making a mock-up Apache helicopter flight simulator for army promotion purposes. Currently, learners are refurbishing a gun mounting for a Second World War motor torpedo boat where they are gaining additional engineering skills as well as developing team working and confidence.
16. Advice, guidance and support are good. Links with parents or guardians are very good and they are involved at all stages of the apprenticeship. They are invited to attend a well-structured event at MoD Boscombe Down where they are shown the squadron hangars, workshops and classrooms before their son or daughter starts their course. QinetiQ provides them with regular updates on the progress their children are making. Staff give learners good additional support for mathematics if they require it. The company encourages learners to attend a

week's outward bound course during their first year on the programme, which is well organised and structured in order to support the further development of their personal and social skills.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

17. Managers and staff at the training centre have regular and effective communication with staff in the workplace, and address issues quickly. Strategic planning is good, and the company takes care to ensure the number of apprentices recruited does not exceed workplace requirements. Tutors are well trained and most are fully qualified teachers.
18. In the last three years, QinetiQ has implemented many successful changes and taken initiatives to continue improving the provision. It has made a considerable financial investment in its apprenticeship facilities and resources. This includes the acquisition of an aircraft hangar with a range of fixed and rotary wing aircraft for learners to practise on. In addition, QinetiQ has refurbished classrooms in the training centre and purchased additional equipment to enhance learners' training opportunities in the workshops.
19. Safeguarding arrangements are good and meet current legal requirements. Since the last inspection, QinetiQ has placed a very effective focus on safeguarding its learners. The child protection officer at QinetiQ maintains a central register of Criminal Records Bureau checks for all staff and work-based supervisors in contact with learners. Arrangements for learners who are accommodated away from home are comprehensive and parents or guardians are involved well. Learners have access to an externally-operated confidential helpline for advice, guidance or counselling, which they value. MoD police carry out random drug searches to replicate good practice in the sector. Learners are fully informed of this at induction and warned of the consequences of being found in possession of such substances. Staff are regularly trained in safeguarding and child protection, have a good awareness of concerns that may arise, and give health and safety a particularly high priority.
20. Arrangements for the promotion of equality and diversity are good. QinetiQ has been particularly successful in promoting engineering to attract more female learners to redress the gender balance. The proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities is small, but QinetiQ takes care to ensure all of its learners are able to succeed. Recent staff training has helped to raise their awareness of the needs of learners with specific disabilities. The company organises a regular programme of equality, diversity and safeguarding topics for staff and learners throughout the year to update their knowledge and understanding. However, lesson planning seldom includes reinforcement of equality and diversity. QinetiQ's learners receive a thorough induction on equality and diversity which improves their good awareness of employer rights and responsibilities. Tutors ask learners questions at progress reviews, although these rarely extend or further reinforce a learner's understanding.

21. The provider has developed and introduced an appropriate quality improvement system, although some processes are not fully developed, used or monitored. In spite of this, managers have dealt appropriately with key areas that have required improvement. Programme reviews take place regularly and QinetiQ gathers feedback from its learners, although it uses these insufficiently to inform provision. Views of parents, guardians, work-based managers and supervisors are not formally collected, but managers and staff use their informal feedback well. The teaching and learning observation process is insufficiently rigorous. Reviews are not observed, some of the grades awarded in the observations are over generous, and the observations do not always highlight meaningful actions that lead to further improvement in the quality of teaching.

22. The self-assessment process is satisfactory but not sufficiently inclusive. The self-assessment report uses data well to analyse the provision and evaluate adequately most aspects of the apprenticeship. However, although the report is overly descriptive and has not clearly identified the strengths of the provision, it recognises most of the key areas for improvement. The quality improvement plan lays out clear and appropriate plans for action. Value for money is outstanding. Learners made excellent progress and achievements are exceptionally high.

Information about the inspection

23. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and two additional inspectors, assisted by the provider's training centre manager, as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and quality improvement plan, the previous inspection and quality monitoring visit report, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.

24. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, and telephone calls to gain the views of learners and employers. They also looked at questionnaires learners had recently completed for the provider. They observed learning sessions, assessments and reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from all programme pathways the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
QinetiQ Limited (Boscombe Down)
Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; **16-18 Leamer 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		
Part-time learners	102	102
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	2	
Outcomes for learners	1	1
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	1	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	1	
How well do learners progress?	1	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	2	
How safe do learners feel?	2	
<i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i>	na	
<i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i>	1	
Quality of provision	2	2
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	2	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	2	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	2	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
Leadership and management	2	
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2	
<i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i>	na	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	2	
How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?	2	
How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement?	2	
How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?	3	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	1	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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