

Ministry of Defence (RAF)

Employer

Inspection dates		8–12 December 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Outstanding-1
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Outstanding-1
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Outstanding-1
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Outstanding-1

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is outstanding because:

- the proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications and within the planned time is outstanding. Success rates are significantly above national rates for all apprenticeship subjects
- success rates in both English and mathematics are very high. Apprentices are confident in using their well-developed literacy and numeracy skills across all areas of the curriculum and to enhance their employability skills
- apprentices make outstanding progress, achieve their qualifications and progress very well because of the outstanding teaching and support they receive
- teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding. Instructors plan learning activities very well so that apprentices of all abilities, including the least and most able, are able to achieve
- instructors make very effective use of initial assessment to identify apprentices' starting points and progress is monitored very carefully to ensure that they get the individualised support they need to be successful
- the curriculum is extremely well planned, with on- and off-the-job training very well coordinated particularly for those apprentices on operational deployment at RAF locations worldwide
- apprentices demonstrate very high levels of resilience, achievement, commitment and determination. Apprentices' behaviour in lessons and in the workplace is exemplary
- practical training resources are outstanding. Apprentices hone their vocational skills on an extensive range of modern equipment including air traffic control simulators, full size replicas of aircraft cargo holds and on advanced jet engines
- care, welfare and support for apprentices are very effective. Apprentices benefit from comprehensive pastoral and welfare support that ensure they quickly receive the individual help they need to make good progress
- leadership and management are highly effective in driving improvements in all aspects of the provision. Staff at all levels of the RAF are clearly focused on ensuring apprentices are well trained and meet the current and future needs of the Service. Safeguarding is good.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Identify, and more widely share, the best practice in teaching, learning and assessment present at many ground training schools to improve further the quality of teaching and learning that apprentices receive.
- Swiftly complete the development and implementation of the virtual learning network so that all apprentices, irrespective of training locations, are able to extend and further their knowledge and skills independently.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
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- The Ministry of Defence (RAF) has 2,355 apprentices. Most are adults and are studying on a range of apprenticeship and advanced apprenticeships, the majority in engineering. About a quarter of apprentices are following apprenticeships in public service and transportation operations and maintenance, with a smaller number of apprentices following programmes in information and communication technology (ICT), warehousing and distribution, aviation operations, hospitality and catering, media and communication, and administration.
- Outcomes for apprentices are outstanding. Virtually all achieve their qualifications and the proportion that completes within the planned timescales is exceptionally high. Success rates for apprentices across all subject areas are significantly above national rates and have been for successive years. Retention rates on all apprenticeship courses are outstanding.
- Success rates on functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics are very high; most apprentices pass first time. The few who need to retake their functional skills qualifications achieve at the second attempt. A small minority achieves functional skills qualifications at a level above that specified in the apprenticeship qualification. All apprentices are well aware of the importance of good skills in English and mathematics and how these underpin their future promotion prospects toward non-commissioned officer ranks within the RAF. They use these skills very well, both in the classroom and in their daily work.
- The vast majority of apprentices make outstanding progress relative to their starting points based on previous learning and qualifications. Apprentices benefit from well organised and highly structured training programmes that prepare them well. Virtually all apprentices progress into their chosen careers within the Service.
- Apprentices rapidly demonstrate competence and confidence in their workplace skills across all apprenticeship programmes, both at ground training schools and whilst on operational deployment at RAF bases in the United Kingdom and overseas. They quickly develop effective personal learning and thinking skills to a very high standard, particularly in making quick, precise and accurate judgements often in highly-pressured and rapidly-changing military environments. For example, apprentices in air traffic control and ground operations develop very precise communications and decision-making skills in ensuring that aircraft traffic control decisions and ground support activities work seamlessly together to ensure safe aircraft operations.
- Achievements for all groups of apprentices are very high, with the few gaps in performance being successfully narrowed over time. All apprentices achieve well and their performance is significantly above their respective counterparts. The few apprentices needing extra help with their studies and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also achieve particularly well compared to their counterparts nationally, although not as well as other RAF apprentices. There are not enough apprentices from minority ethnic groups for any differences in achievements to be statistically significant.

- Apprentices talk with pride of their involvement in an extensive range of volunteering initiatives such as local community projects, charity work and skills competitions. Apprentices readily identify the importance of 'public service' and 'duty' and how the skills they gain through community projects can apply in other contexts. For example, some apprentices are involved in the upkeep of the National Memorial Arboretum or support local schools with ground maintenance. Others are involved in the annual Cosford Air Show that benefits a number of RAF charities.
- Apprentices benefit from the many career development opportunities available to them upon completion of their apprenticeship, including secure and well paid employment. A few have been selected for early promotion to non-commissioned officer posts and the majority achieve such advancement.
- Career development funding supports many apprentices to progress their training aspirations to the next level, including studying higher education to secure promotion or enhance their career progression.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding. Apprentices make excellent progress in their studies and achieve well. They conduct themselves impeccably during teaching and assessment activities. They take great pride in their uniforms and regularly demonstrate the importance of integrity and excellence in all aspects of their life within the RAF. As a result, outcomes for apprentices are also outstanding.
- In the high proportion of outstanding lessons, instructors ensure that a range of activities challenges apprentices to achieve their learning goals, and within expected timescales. Training is meticulously planned and constantly reviewed to ensure that it meets the needs of apprentices and the RAF. Apprentices talk with confidence about the range of work they are engaged in, the good progress they have made since joining the Service and the skills they have developed to work independently.
- Highly-skilled instructors use their significant operational experience to contextualise, develop and enhance apprentices' knowledge and understanding. They effectively use a range of teaching and learning strategies to reinforce and check apprentices' recall of knowledge from previous lessons and to extend their learning into new topics. They know their apprentices very well and encourage and praise them. As a result, apprentices enjoy learning and they feel safe, valued and respected.
- Outstanding resources enhance learning. Apprentices at the Defence Fire Training and Development Centre benefit from practising their practical skills on a full aircraft simulator. At the Central Air Traffic Control School, apprentices learn the complex skill of coordinating airborne aircraft operations using a state-of-the-art virtual air traffic control simulator. These invaluable pieces of equipment significantly improve the confidence and competence of apprentices when preparing to work in a range of highly challenging and safety critical situations.
- Apprentices receive very good care and support. Comprehensive welfare support arrangements at all ground training schools ensure that apprentices are able to receive swift access to an extensive range of onsite services including multi-faith chaplaincy, counselling and medical assistance. For example, a small minority of apprentices in the Regiment are 'back classed' if they receive an injury that hinders their progress during their rigorous, physically demanding training. These apprentices value this support as it enables them to recuperate and then successfully re-engage with their training.
- Initial assessment is comprehensive and accurately identifies apprentices' starting points. Pre-apprentice 'Phase one' training successfully allows training staff to build up a comprehensive picture of apprentices' strengths and their support needs at the start of the course. Very detailed and informative individual learning plans enable instructors and other staff to support apprentices during their 'Phase two' trade-specific apprenticeship training. Support for the few

apprentices with identified specific learning support needs is very good. However, in a small minority of cases, at more remote training centres, they do always not receive sufficient one-to-one specialist support in a timely manner.

- Assessment for apprentices is routine, frequent and extremely thorough. Instructors extend apprentices’ understanding by asking skilful questions and providing immediate verbal feedback on practical tasks and classroom activities. They provide comprehensive and detailed written feedback on assignments, enabling apprentices to have a very clear understanding of how to improve their performance. Progress is accurately monitored and care is taken to ensure that apprentices fully understand what it is they need to do to improve and progress. However, leaders recognise that instructional staff would benefit from the sharing of good practices evident at the various training schools.
- Instructors inspire apprentices to develop excellent high-level vocational-specific skills. For example, catering apprentices enjoyed attending competitions to test their culinary skills, whilst one engineering apprentice has been selected to represent the United Kingdom in the WorldSkills 2015 in São Paulo, Brazil.
- Teaching resources are of a high standard and are used well to support apprentices. Well-produced, high-quality training manuals and visual aids are used effectively by instructors. However, apprentices’ use of the virtual learning environment (VLE) is underdeveloped, both during lessons and outside the classroom. The RAF is at the early stages of developing a new VLE system, but it is too soon to judge its effectiveness.
- Apprentices make exceptional progress in achieving functional skills in English and mathematics early on in their course. Specialist and qualified instructors use their knowledge and expertise very effectively to support and motivate apprentices. As a result, apprentices enjoy their functional skills learning and value how the activities help them improve their skills. Instructors routinely correct spelling and grammar in apprentices’ work and most integrate English and mathematics very well in their vocational lessons. Engineering apprentices develop particularly high levels of ICT skills.
- Information, advice and guidance for apprentices are very thorough and detailed. Pre-course information is comprehensive, ensuring that apprentices have a clear understanding of the level of commitment needed to support their learning and career progression within the RAF. Course retention is outstanding, as is progression by apprentices to higher levels of study and into employment.
- Staff promote equality and diversity very effectively. Apprentices have a good understanding of their own rights and responsibilities and of wider diversity themes whilst at ground training schools and in the workplace. They demonstrate good respect for each other no matter what their heritage, beliefs, gender or sexual orientation.

Public services	Good
Apprenticeships	

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, as reflected in the high outcomes for apprentices. At the Defence College of Intelligence and Security, and the Defence College of Police and Guarding, outcomes are very high. Outcomes for the RAF Regiment programme are just above the national rate, but timely outcomes declined to around the average, in part due to the highly physical demands of the programme and the requirement for some apprentices to deploy on operational duty overseas.
- Apprentices benefit from the very high expectations of their instructors, all of whom have excellent vocational knowledge, appropriate qualifications and significant military experience. They use their knowledge and experience very effectively to support and motivate the apprentices. The majority achieve qualifications in excess of those required by the framework.

Apprentices in intelligence continue their studies at degree level following completion of their apprenticeship.

- Training for apprentices is comprehensive and detailed, helping them to learn and quickly attain the high standards of performance expected in the military. Instructors set apprentices ambitious tasks in both lessons and practical activities, utilising a wide range of effective instructional activities. Apprentices respond well to these challenges.
- Instructors routinely challenge the more able apprentices and provide excellent support for those who are less able. As a result, apprentices of different abilities develop very good practical and technical skills in both security and intelligence work. In a few lessons, instructors' questioning techniques do not always encourage all apprentices to actively participate in their learning and some remain quiet throughout their lesson.
- Instructors use learning technology very effectively to support the rapid development of apprentices in the classroom. However, whilst onsite libraries and e-learning facilities enable apprentices to continue their studies at their bases when classes have finished, the VLE is underdeveloped and most apprentices do not use it effectively to enhance or extend their learning.
- Assessment practices are excellent. Apprentices receive frequent support in the workplace from skilled instructors, resulting in accurate, robust and fair judgements of their practical and technical skills. Planning for assessment is extremely well detailed and thorough with very effective use of target setting to ensure rapid completion by apprentices of their qualifications.
- The standard of apprentices' work is very high. Apprentices in intelligence often collaborate with their peers and others in order to evaluate and swiftly present timely solutions to complex intelligence challenges, such as assisting aircrews in planning reconnaissance missions and analysing the resulting data obtained from 'operational sorties'. Apprentices on the police training programme successfully apply conflict resolution strategies to a range of challenging situations. In both respects, apprentices quickly demonstrate their value to the RAF.
- Instructors routinely provide very detailed and comprehensive verbal feedback to help apprentices make good and timely progress. This helps support apprentices' skills development. Apprentices are very positive about their instructors and the support they receive in the workplace to complete their qualifications. However, in a few isolated examples, written feedback is too descriptive and, as a result, it does not give clear judgements or guidance to apprentices on how to improve their performance.
- Instructors' support for apprentices is excellent. Thorough initial assessment leads to apprentices' needs being identified quickly and accurately, including any potential barriers to learning. Where necessary, additional specialist assessments are carried out and required support is quickly put in place. Resulting learning plans are detailed and shared with instructors who consider apprentices' strengths and individual needs when teaching. Apprentices benefit from very effective welfare support procedures at their individual training schools, including convenient access to specialist staff who provide sensitive guidance on a range of personal matters. Many apprentices report that this support has been instrumental in their continuation and success on the programme.
- Support sessions for improving apprentices' English and mathematics skills are outstanding, particularly in the RAF Regiment. Some apprentices enter the Regiment with few formal qualifications, including low skill levels in English and mathematics. However, at the conclusion of the apprenticeship most apprentices successfully achieve both English and mathematics at level 2. Initial and diagnostic assessments are used very effectively by instructors to set and share individual learning targets with apprentices in identifying what they need to do to improve. Apprentices value highly the support they receive, both in and out of the classroom, and how it helps them to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Advice and guidance are good. Apprentices receive clear information on career and qualification progression. This motivates apprentices to achieve well and to study towards higher-level functional skills qualifications, which are a requirement for promotion. Safeguarding arrangements for the few young apprentices in the RAF Regiment are robust.

- Instructors integrate equality and diversity well into apprentices' learning. Apprentices, many of whom will work overseas, are encouraged to consider the cultures and lifestyles of the people they may encounter and how they need to act with respect and tolerance often under challenging operational circumstances.

Engineering

Apprenticeships

Outstanding

- Outstanding teaching, learning and assessment enable apprentices to make excellent progress and achieve exceptionally well. Success rates are outstanding on all courses and most apprentices progress to higher-level studies. Apprentices develop a thorough understanding of key engineering concepts and gain excellent practical skills that support them well in their careers within the RAF.
- Instructors have excellent vocational knowledge. They use their technical skills and experience very effectively to motivate and support apprentices well. They plan effective learning activities and use a variety of methods that engage and stimulate apprentices' interest very well. Instructors make good use of interactive learning technology and visual aids to help apprentices extend their knowledge and understanding and, as a result, apprentices are highly interested and are keen to learn. However, the resources on the VLE to support apprentices' learning outside of the classroom require further improvement.
- Teaching in theory and practical lessons is outstanding. Instructors use very effective questioning techniques to develop and check apprentices' understanding. They link theory and practice well using good examples from the workplace. Instructors use their extensive coaching expertise effectively, valuing apprentices' contributions to lessons. In practical sessions, complex engineering tasks are very clearly explained by instructors and, as a result, apprentices increase their confidence in using specialist tools and equipment and develop high levels of communication, analytical and team-working skills. All lessons have a brisk and rapid pace that challenges and stretches apprentices to achieve their full potential and make excellent progress.
- Resources to support teaching and learning are outstanding. The resources at the Number 1 School of Technical Training provide apprentices with access to exceptionally high-quality specialist training facilities, allowing them to develop and extend their aircraft engineering skills. Resources include specialist aeronautical equipment for the analysis, testing and repair of hydraulics and electrical engineering control panels associated with complex mechanical, avionic, electrical, weapons and safety equipment trades. Apprentices use these resources well to work to exacting tolerances that are well above the assessment criteria and, as a result, they make significant and sustained improvement throughout their apprenticeship.
- Assessment is outstanding. Apprentices are closely monitored whilst in the training school and out on placement in their squadrons. They are regularly assessed and reviewed by experienced and trained staff and their progress is accurately recorded. Apprentices' portfolios are comprehensive and contain a diverse range of relevant evidence. Instructors give good, clear and concise written and oral feedback following observations. Assessment is accurate and thorough. All apprentices understand what they have to do to improve.
- Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Initial assessment is thorough and detailed. Apprentices receive comprehensive pre-course information, and the induction programme meets their needs well. Apprentices are closely monitored. Those who are at risk of falling behind against their learning targets or exhibit changes in performance or behaviour are very quickly identified and individualised support is swiftly provided. All apprentices state they feel very safe and well cared for while training.
- The development of apprentices' English and mathematics skills is outstanding. All apprentices achieve their functional skills during basic training. This helps them to make rapid progress on their technical training course. Instructors routinely correct apprentices' punctuation and

grammar and give constructive feedback on the spelling in their written work and how it can be improved. Mathematics is well promoted, for example, working out conversion from UK to US gallons for aircraft refuelling operations or when calculating engine thrust. Instructors routinely provide additional help for those requiring numeracy and literacy support.

- The promotion and reinforcement of safe working practice is outstanding. Apprentices meticulously adhere to technical instructions when undertaking repairs and maintenance on complex and critical aircraft components including engines, weapons systems and safety equipment such as ejector seats. They ensure that their work is always checked and confirmed as 'operational ready' by a qualified engineer.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is very good. As part of basic training, apprentices receive a thorough induction covering equality and diversity, respect for others and safeguarding. During trade-specific training, they further develop their awareness of these aspects to a much-heightened level of understanding.

ICT for practitioners

Outstanding

Apprenticeships

- Teaching, learning and assessment are outstanding. Success rates for apprentices, including the proportion who achieve their qualifications within the planned timescales, have been outstanding for the past three years both on IT practitioners and IT users programmes. All apprentices successfully progress to a job within the RAF and/or higher education.
- A high proportion of teaching on the apprenticeship course is outstanding and none is less than good. Individual apprentices' needs are well met, both in practical and theoretical lessons where they work at their own speeds, with the more able being challenged well. Instructors use questioning techniques very effectively in lessons to assess how much learning is taking place in extending apprentices' knowledge and understanding.
- Instructors are highly skilled in providing very effective training. For example, apprentices early on in their course were able to set up various communication circuits and accurately measure the quality of transmission for a variety of conditions that they checked by using the appropriate formulae. High-quality learning materials and equipment support apprentices well in practical lessons. However, apprentices' use of the VLE is underdeveloped, both during and outside the classroom, and limits the range of resources available to them.
- Apprentices demonstrate excellent technical skills acquisition through realistic tasks and activities planned at various stages of their course, such as the setting up of a secure communication network capable of supporting complex military operations under a range of scenarios. Instructors effectively promote high standards and the RAF ethos to enthusiastic apprentices, who in turn take pride in the technical quality of their work.
- High standards in English and mathematics are routinely reinforced to apprentices in all lessons. Instructors promote the importance of good standards in mathematics through using naturally-occurring tasks. Spelling and grammar are corrected routinely in written work and apprentices are encouraged to develop their verbal and communication skills through projects and assignments, so that they can express themselves confidently in a range of situations.
- Assessment practice is very strong, with accurate and informative feedback from instructors to apprentices. Apprentices' portfolios are well organised and their work demonstrates a very high standard of technical performance. Extensive and helpful written feedback by instructors ensures that apprentices know how to make improvements to their work and, as a result, they have a good understanding of their progress.
- Initial assessment is used very successfully to identify apprentices' initial starting points and the support they will need to assist them with their studies. However, the results of diagnostic assessment are not used well enough to inform the planning of learning of their functional skills

in ICT. This has been recognised by the RAF and, as a result of apprentices' feedback, appropriate changes have been made.

- Detailed advice is given during induction to ensure apprentices know the next steps in their training. Further advice and guidance are discussed frequently with them during their performance reviews. Performance reviews make good use of a wide range of rich evidence of the apprentices' strengths and areas for improvement. Apprentices and instructors participate very well to agree jointly realistic, but challenging, targets for performance. The excellent relationships and high levels of trust between the apprentice and their experienced colleagues promote very good and rapid progress.
- Apprentices enjoy their learning and become highly motivated and resilient. Their employability skills, including team working and problem solving, are well developed, for example through visits to the Falkland Islands and activities in London to research and compare events in the theatre of war.
- Apprentices benefit from good access to comprehensive support and welfare services that meet their individual needs well. Apprentices know who to contact if they require assistance and support. For example, one apprentice was given very supportive and helpful advice and guidance about how to progress with his research on how to apply for a commission in the RAF.
- Apprentices treat others with great respect and understand well the wider implications of bullying and banter within the workplace. They understand and discuss the diversity of global networking issues during their technical work.
- Safeguarding is good and instructors and welfare staff are actively involved in ensuring the support needs of apprentices are well met throughout their training. Apprentices study cyber-awareness as part of their course and understand well the personal and security risks of online activities.

Warehousing and distribution

Good

Apprenticeships

- Good teaching, learning and assessment have maintained well above average success rates. The proportion of apprentices who achieve within the planned timescales is high. Apprentices enjoy their training and make good progress. Apprentices have increased confidence and develop a good range of skills, such as working with others, problem solving and improving their own performance essential for effective operational logistics and supply.
- Instructors have a good rapport with apprentices. They are enthusiastic, experienced practitioners with sound operational warehouse and distribution knowledge, which helps apprentices develop the competence and skills to work effectively in a range of logistical environments. All apprentices have a high level of health and safety awareness and observe the health and safety regulations in every aspect of their training. For example, they display very good knowledge of handling hazardous and dangerous goods.
- In the high proportion of good lessons, apprentices make very good progress. In these lessons, learning is challenging and instructors provide a wide variety of activities that are particularly successful in developing apprentices' skills in warehouse and distribution. For example, in one lesson, the instructor skilfully emphasised the consequences of inaccurate documentation and how it can affect military supply operations.
- During practical training, apprentices demonstrate very good skills in selecting and prioritising equipment and materials, using the correct equipment for moving goods and supplies. When apprentices are deployed to operational bases, they achieve many additional qualifications such as forklift driving, advanced trade training in supply procedures and the safe handling and moving of munitions.
- Comprehensive initial advice and guidance ensure that apprentices have good understanding of the expectations and requirements of their course. Apprentices are provided with clear oral and

written feedback at all stages of their development. Instructors deliver timely and effective support to apprentices during workplace training. For example, instructors provide apprentices with additional assessments when they are deployed to operational bases around the world.

- Assessment for learning is good. A wide range of effective assessment methods is used by instructors to ensure apprentices are able to demonstrate the required knowledge and competence in warehousing and distribution. Instructors make particularly good use of professional discussions to check apprentices' knowledge of picking, sorting and moving goods efficiently. Reviews of apprentices' progress are timely with clear target setting that ensures apprentices make good progress.
- Detailed and informative workbooks support the development of apprentices' storage and distribution skills particularly well. However, a significant minority of exercises and activities in these workbooks are not completed, and there are insufficient checks by instructors on whether the written answers and calculations are correct.
- Instructors' use of questioning is not always sufficiently planned or precise to involve all apprentices. In a very small minority of instances, instructors make insufficient use of directed questions to check all apprentices' understanding and maintain high levels of concentration and attention.
- Technology is used well to promote learning and develop apprentices' skills. During a training session, apprentices made effective use of computer software packages to complete documentation accurately for dispatching equipment. Instructors and apprentices make good use of the intranet to send out and submit work for marking while deployed at remote operating bases. However, limited use is made of digital recorders by instructors to record professional discussions and speed up their assessment decisions.
- Initial assessment is used well to identify accurately the abilities of apprentices upon entry to the RAF. Staff use the information collected to set appropriately challenging learning targets and ensure the timely identification of any additional learning support needs, ensuring that specialist assistance is quickly provided where necessary. Support for apprentices is very good. Apprentices receive good personal and specialist welfare advice throughout their apprenticeship.
- Apprentices develop their English skills well during training. They are confident in discussing and explaining their material-moving handling skills during discussions with instructors. Apprentices quickly develop a precise level of understanding of the technical language use in warehousing and distribution operations. They also display good mathematical skills in calculating the correct value of goods, weights, sizes and delivery schedules.
- Apprentices demonstrate a sound awareness of equality issues. The 'beliefs and values' programme, that apprentices complete during initial training, develops their sense of self-worth and respect for others. This ensures apprentices have a good understanding of key principles of equality and diversity and they demonstrate this in their written work and in the workplace when dealing with customers and colleagues. However, the promotion of equality themes during progress reviews is often too cursory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Outstanding leadership and management have led to significant improvements in the quality of training and the standards achieved by apprentices since the last inspection. Teaching, learning and assessment have improved and are now outstanding. The proportion of apprentices successfully achieving their qualification within their agreed timescale has been very high for the last three years and has increased again in 2014.
- Leaders and managers have created a positive culture for apprenticeship training that is working well. Apprenticeships are now seen as the backbone of the RAF's approach to developing its younger staff and recent recruits. Apprenticeships are well understood and highly valued by leaders at all levels in the Service and by apprentices themselves.

- As both employer and trainer, the RAF is knowledgeable when it comes to ensuring that the qualifications it uses are suitable for purpose and benefit both apprentices and the armed services. RAF staff play a significant role in supporting awarding bodies in the development of new qualifications. For example, the first cohort of advanced apprentices in Intelligence Analysis have recently completed their studies. Apprentices make good progress in the RAF once they have achieved their qualifications.
- Apprentices' progress targets and their completion dates are very closely monitored. Deployments to operational bases overseas and in the UK are factored into apprentices' programmes as far as possible, and the effects on their programmes by any short notice deployments are ameliorated as far as is possible within the needs of the Service.
- Through self-assessment and other service-wide approaches, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is closely monitored and suitable and rapid interventions are put in place if improvements are needed. Apprentices' views regarding the quality of their training are gathered frequently and used well to inform decisions about how to improve the provision.
- Instructors' work is evaluated and forms part of a comprehensive performance management system. However, sometimes the records of lesson observations focus too much on the instructors' performance and not enough on how well apprentices are learning.
- The self-assessment process results in suitably detailed and useful improvement plans. These are supported by good staff development, including a strategy to ensure that apprentices benefit from a wider range of teaching activities and methods than observed at the last inspection. This strategy is proving effective and is now being rolled out across all training schools.
- Apprentices develop their skills in English and mathematics very well. As part of their initial training at RAF Halton, they achieve a functional skills qualification at either level 1 or 2, and once they are on the apprenticeship programme, the further development of these skills is supported well by their instructors. One of the requirements for promotion to corporal in the RAF is the achievement of a level 2 qualification in English and mathematics, and this acts a sharp motivator for apprentices.
- The profile, policy and approaches relating to equality and diversity across the RAF have been developed further since the last inspection. Strategies to increase the recruitment of more apprentices with a minority ethnic heritage have been developed and there are detailed targets and action plans to take this work forward through to 2020. The RAF has supported over 320 young women through a range of engineering taster activities as part of its support for the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) agenda. Over half of the young women who participated in these programmes have moved into STEM courses or careers over the last three years. Inspectors observed much more effective promotion of equality and diversity by instructors during lessons and in reviews than at the last inspection, but a few opportunities to extend further understanding were missed.
- Safeguarding of apprentices is good. The RAF meets its legal requirements and provides a wide range of well-planned and comprehensive care and welfare services that benefits apprentices. Over-arching service-wide policies define what must be in place at each base. The implementation and monitoring of these policies are the responsibility of the station commanders and their extensive welfare teams. These teams know the young people in their care exceptionally well. They are keenly aware of the potential risks to young servicemen and women, including the risks of radicalisation, bullying and harassment associated with sexual preferences. For example, they pay particular attention to behaviours and attitudes when young airmen and women return from combat zones and other periods of active deployment.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Ministry of Defence (RAF)

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Outcomes for learners	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
The effectiveness of leadership and management	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Public services	2
Engineering	1
ICT for practitioners	1
Warehousing and distribution	2

Provider details

Type of provider	Employer							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	2576							
Chief of Staff Training	Air Vice-Marshal Andrew Turner OBE, CBE							
Date of previous inspection	January 2009							
Website address	http://www.raf.mod.uk/							
Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	141	864	97	1253	-	-		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Skills Funding Agency (SFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None 							

Contextual information

The Ministry of Defence Royal Air Force Headquarters 22 (Training) Group is responsible to Headquarters Air Command for the provision of appropriately trained military and civilian personnel. Headquarters 22 (Training) Group role is to determine policy and provide guidance and support to all flying and ground training establishments. The Apprenticeships Management Team is part of Headquarters 22 (Training) Group, and responsible for the management and overall performance management of the apprenticeship programme.

The Royal Air Force provides a broad range of apprenticeships to meet the strategic defence needs of the United Kingdom. Apprenticeships within the Royal Air Force are delivered at 14 Ground Training Schools located across the United Kingdom. A total of 2,355 apprentices are in learning, 43% of whom are apprentices and 57% advanced apprentices. Upon completion of their training, apprentices are deployed across 38 operational support units in the United Kingdom and overseas.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Victor Reid HMI

Two of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the Squadron Leader, Apprenticeship Management Team, Headquarters 22 (Training) Group carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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