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Ms Melanie Jackson
Head of Apprentice Training School
QinetiQ Limited
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MoD Boscombe Down
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Dear Ms Jackson

Short inspection of QinetiQ Limited (Apprenticeship Training School)

Following the short inspection on 20 and 21 April 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The inspection was the first short inspection carried out since QinetiQ was judged to be good in February 2012.

This provider continues to be good.

Apprentices continue to receive good education and training. Their achievements remain high and they continue to make good progress. The vast majority of them continue to be employed by the company on successful completion of their apprenticeship. Managers have introduced a wider enrichment programme. As a result, apprentices have valuable opportunities to develop their knowledge and improve their employability skills. Apprentices can explain their work clearly and well; they work well as members of a team and they enjoy their time in the training school.

Managers know the areas of teaching and learning and the promotion of fundamental British values that need further improvement. They are taking action to deal with them. Since the previous inspection, they have made major improvements to the accommodation and resources. The new hangar and the wider range of aircraft have enhanced the quality of the learning environment greatly and are helping staff to improve the overall quality of provision.

Safeguarding is effective.

Staff and apprentices indicate that they feel safe around the training school and the site. Managers and staff oversee safeguarding processes, including health and safety, effectively. Apprentices and staff are subject to a wide range of security checks prior to, and during, employment. All staff at the training school and the

mentors who work with apprentices on other stations and range sites have appropriate pre-employment checks regarding their suitability to work with young people or vulnerable adults and receive suitable training to support them in this aspect of their work. These checks are renewed every three years. Managers have made effective links with external agencies such as the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the local authority. In addition, the company has an employee well-being service which provides 24-hour personal support for all employees.

The high degree of security protection, which is an integral part of working for QinetiQ at Boscombe Down and other sites, means that apprentices are protected well from radicalisation and extremism. However, managers and staff recognise the need to carry out further work to enable apprentices to understand fundamental British values better through structured discussions in lessons and with tutors.

Inspection findings

- The initial advice and guidance given to potential apprentices are of a very high standard. Staff brief applicants thoroughly about the apprenticeship programme. Interviews are welcoming and testing. These processes lead to appropriate recruitment to the apprenticeship programme. Hardly any apprentices leave the programme early. The vast majority make good or better progress and succeed in gaining a range of qualifications and a very good set of employability skills. A very high percentage of them continue to work for QinetiQ once they complete their apprenticeship.
- Managers are aware that they need to do more to follow apprentices through their careers and show how they gain advancement either in QinetiQ or elsewhere. They appreciate that better analysis of careers after qualifying will help to prove the worth of apprentices to the business, provide more secure evidence of longer-term outcomes for apprentices and help to provide improved careers guidance for apprentices. Surveys of apprentices show that they would like careers guidance to have a higher profile. Senior managers in the company already show a high degree of commitment to the apprenticeship training school. For example, the chief executive of the company is carrying out a work swap with an apprentice for a day later this year.
- Since the previous inspection, target setting and monitoring of apprentices' progress have improved very well. Teachers set short-term educational targets for apprentices and the apprentices' line managers set longer-term corporate targets. These targets are clear and are generally being met. Apprentices now have concise and helpful individualised learning plans, which staff use effectively to track apprentices' progress and as a vehicle for giving them written feedback on how to improve their work.
- Teaching, learning and assessment remain good. Teachers have high expectations of apprentices and a great deal of respect exists between apprentices and their teachers. Apprentices are keen to learn. However, the slow pace, and lack of sufficiently challenging activities to ensure that apprentices are engaged more consistently and working to their full potential detract from the effectiveness of a significant minority of lessons. QinetiQ's lesson observers have noted these characteristics; more generally, their analysis of teaching, learning and assessment matched that of the inspection team.

- Equality and diversity have a higher profile now than at the previous inspection. Managers have put in place appropriate policies across the company to support the development of an inclusive workforce. Managers have increased the amount of targeted work experience for local schools and the use of apprentices as science, technology, engineering and mathematics ambassadors. More young women are now applying for places at the training school. The training school has more female teachers and managers, so there is a good supply of role models to help young women decide on engineering as a career.
- Leaders and managers have improved the self-assessment of the provision and now take more account of apprentices' views through surveys, focus groups and meetings involving the whole training school. They are now in the process of translating this into a prioritised action plan that focuses on raising standards of teaching, learning and assessment to an outstanding level.

Next steps for the provider

Leaders and managers should ensure that:

- apprentices have more extensive and well-planned opportunities to broaden their understanding of fundamental British values as part of their training programme
- apprentices have good opportunities to discuss their future careers throughout their training
- managers use the outcomes of lesson observations consistently and effectively in performance management and appraisal processes to support improvements in teaching and learning.

I am copying this letter to the Skills Funding Agency. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Wilf Hudson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection, one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Ofsted Inspector were assisted by the head of the training school, as nominee. We met with you, members of the leadership team, your internal quality assurance manager, the safeguarding team, apprentices and teachers. We carried out lesson observations and reviewed apprentices' portfolios in the workplace. We scrutinised key strategic and policy documents, including those relating to quality assurance, safeguarding, performance, curriculum design and management. We analysed data on apprentices' achievements and their progress relative to their starting points. We also analysed feedback from apprentices.