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Brigadier S Anderson  
Head of Individual Development  
Army Headquarters  
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Dear Brigadier Anderson

### **Short inspection of Army apprenticeships**

Following the short inspection on 26–27 July 2017, 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 the provider was judged to be good in April 2013.

### **This provider continues to be good.**

Senior leaders have kept a good focus on improving the quality of learning and the levels of achievement throughout the very large Army apprenticeship programme. They have set increasingly high expectations for staff and apprentices. They have challenged and supported military and subcontracted staff to improve the quality of the provision. As a result, the large majority of apprentices make good progress. A very good proportion of them achieve their qualifications and, for most, this is within the time expected. For many, this enables them to gain promotion or additional responsibilities.

Senior leaders and managers have made good progress in dealing with the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. They have ensured that:

- observers and training supervisors carry out observations of teaching and learning that focus on the learning achieved, identify good practice and provide constructive feedback to help tutors and instructors to improve
- leaders and managers employed by the apprenticeship subcontractors focus strongly on tutors' development to improve teaching, learning and assessment
- the training courses for military instructors now prepare instructors much more effectively to consider and meet the needs of individual learners
- the large majority of tutors, instructors and assessors produce and regularly update apprentices' individual learning plans and reviews with good levels of

detail and appropriate targets.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

- Leaders place a high priority on safeguarding apprentices. They make sure that managers carry out appropriate checks on all instructors in training establishments and on the subcontracted teaching staff before they have contact with apprentices.
- Instructors and tutors provide effective safeguarding training during apprentices' induction. They reinforce this through the skilful weaving of safeguarding themes into training activities, in functional skills reading and listening exercises, and during reviews. Apprentices feel safe and are safe. They know what to do if they have any concerns. They also have a very good understanding of safe working practices.
- Apprentices have a clear understanding of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. Managers assess and manage the risks associated with these dangers effectively to meet the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty.

### **Inspection findings**

- Senior leaders have improved significantly the governance arrangements for apprenticeships since the previous inspection. The strategic Army apprenticeship management board is now much better informed about key performance issues. The board successfully challenges the operational-level apprenticeship boards within the capability directorates to improve performance. This has been achieved through a much-improved focus on high-quality performance and data reports presented by the business support team to each board ahead of their meetings. Clear improvement targets are set within quality improvement plans at each level and these include challenging expectations for minimum levels of performance. The management boards at each level monitor closely each directorate's performance against these plans. As a result, leaders and managers have a clear understanding of the strengths of the provision.
- Managers within each of the five apprenticeship subcontractors ensure that their tutors are suitably qualified. They provide good support to help them to improve. Observers also provide good developmental feedback to tutors following their regular observations of learning. Military instructors benefit from training that focuses strongly on developing coaching and feedback skills. Feedback from observations now focuses much more effectively on what apprentices learn as a result of instructors' teaching rather than concentrating on the teaching process.
- The apprenticeship business support team closely monitors the quality of subcontracted provision. Excellent performance data, which is readily available to staff at every level, facilitates management and quality assurance activities.
- The large majority of apprentices achieve their functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics at the required level. Many choose to take level 2 qualifications early in their intermediate apprenticeship. A very high proportion achieve functional skills qualifications at their first attempt, which is particularly impressive because many have very low levels of prior attainment in these key

subjects. Tutors provide good support to apprentices wherever they have weaker knowledge, skills and understanding. Apprentices value highly the flexible approach that tutors take in fitting tuition and support for functional skills around the demands of their training and employment. Apprentices and functional skills learners impressed inspectors with their enthusiasm and commitment.

- As a result of the good skills, knowledge and behaviours that soldiers develop during their apprenticeships, a high proportion gain extra responsibilities or promotion. This is because senior leaders recognise the value of apprenticeships and have thoroughly integrated them at intermediate, advanced and, more recently, higher levels into soldiers' career development pathways.
- The support provided by tutors and learning support managers to apprentices with learning difficulties is generally good. However, less support is available for these learners in a small minority of training establishments and Field Army units.
- Leaders do not monitor the performance of all groups of apprentices and have yet to make sure that the progress of a small minority of apprentices is good. The proportion of tutors, instructors and assessors who set high-quality improvement targets in apprentices' individual learning plans and reviews requires improvement.

### **Next steps for the provider**

Leaders and managers should ensure that:

- they monitor and measure the achievement of apprentices from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with learning difficulties to make sure that they achieve as well as their peers
- the small numbers of apprentices on policing and health and social care programmes achieve in the expected time
- apprentices on the combat infantry public services apprenticeship, who comprise nearly a third of the provision, continue to make good progress and achieve within expected timescales
- all tutors, instructors and assessors set high-quality targets for apprentices to achieve
- all apprentices with learning difficulties receive good support.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Shackleton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection, two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Ofsted Inspectors were assisted by SO1 Skills Dev. Inspectors met with members of the senior apprenticeship leadership and management team, training supervisors, tutors, instructors and apprentices. They scrutinised key strategic and policy documents, including those relating to quality assurance, safeguarding and the performance of Army apprenticeship programmes. Inspectors analysed data on apprentices' and standalone functional skills learners' achievements and progress relative to their starting points. Additionally, they analysed feedback from apprentices.