

Inspection of BAE Systems PLC

Inspection dates: 19–22 October 2021

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Apprenticeships

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Information about this provider

BAE Systems PLC (BAE Systems) is a global advanced defence technology company. In the United Kingdom, the company holds contracts with English and Scottish funding bodies to deliver apprenticeships. This inspection focused on the apprentices who are employed by BAE Systems, who work in England and are funded through the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). BAE Systems subcontracts out nearly half of the provision to 17 training providers across England. The largest of these are Furness College, Blackpool and the Fylde College, the University of Central Lancashire and IPS International Limited.

At the time of inspection, there were 1,916 apprentices. The vast majority are aged over 19 years old, and around one quarter are 16 to 18 years old. The majority of apprentices study in engineering at levels 2 to 6. The remaining apprentices undertake programmes in business administration, project management and finance. The majority of apprentices study at level 3, with around a third who study at level 6. The rest study at levels 2, 4 and 7.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Apprentices are very proud to work at BAE Systems and are exceptionally well motivated. They thoroughly enjoy their learning and demonstrate extremely positive attitudes to their studies. Tutors and skills coaches help apprentices achieve their full potential.

Apprentices respond wholeheartedly to the high priority that tutors and skills coaches place on attendance and punctuality. They always arrive at work and training sessions on time. Their attendance is exemplary.

Apprentices develop confidence, resilience, adaptability and character as a result of their apprenticeship. New apprentices complete an outward-bound course at the start of their course. They learn about the high standards of behaviour that the company expects. The challenging activities that apprentices complete develop their teamworking, problem-solving and leadership skills, which they then use in the workplace. Apprentices flourish as individuals.

Apprentices gain and develop the high levels of knowledge, technical skills and behaviours that they need to work in aerospace and maritime industries. For instance, level 3 engineering apprentices learn a wide range of specialist skills such as fitting the electrical components on aircraft carriers and fighter jets.

Apprentices strive to achieve to the best of their ability in the workplace. All apprentices go on to be successful in their specialist areas and move into permanent or promoted posts within the company. In addition, a high proportion move on to higher levels of study such as levels 4 and 6 in engineering.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Board members and senior leaders have established a culture of high aspirations for themselves, their staff and the apprentices they train. The very ambitious curriculum ensures that apprentices make excellent progress in their work and careers.

Senior leaders have a clear rationale for the curriculum they offer. They use information from business leaders to plan the curriculum and to manage staff succession planning and growth. Leaders support staff to plan and implement highly effective apprenticeship programmes.

Tutors and skills coaches use highly effective teaching and assessment strategies. They identify what apprentices already know and what they need to learn at the start of the programme. They use this information to plan an individualised curriculum that meets the development needs of apprentices and the exacting technical requirements of BAE Systems.

Tutors and skills coaches provide constructive feedback to apprentices, which helps them to improve. As a result, apprentices produce work of an exceptionally high standard that

meets the stringent expectations of the company. For example, level 2 engineering apprentices can work to the required high industry tolerances.

Skills coaches use interesting workplace examples to illustrate key concepts to apprentices. Level 3 engineering apprentices learn about the theory of human eyesight and strobe lighting, and how this can make a propeller appear to be stationary when it is actually moving at high speed.

Tutors and skills coaches provide effective support to apprentices who have additional learning needs. This helps them improve their written work and supports them to retain information into their long-term memory.

Apprentices are extremely well prepared for their final assessments. Level 3 engineering apprentices take part in workshops that link their assessments to their experiences in the workplace in order to illustrate their learning and competence in preparation for their assessments.

Apprentices quickly become a valuable asset to their employer on completion of their apprenticeship. For instance, level 3 maritime engineering apprentices have been deployed to aircraft carriers in international waters to repair gas turbines. Many apprentices become mentors for new apprentices.

Senior leaders and staff are aspirational for their apprentices. They provide encouragement and opportunities for apprentices to successfully take part in skills competitions and projects. For instance, apprentices have won awards in World Skills competitions and the Royal Academy of Leaders scholarship programme.

Apprentices demonstrate an exceptional awareness about the risks of working in high security and risk industries. They ensure they follow organisational security procedures and use equipment safely, conforming to expected organisational protocols. Apprentices are very aware of the importance of not sharing documents outside the business.

Apprentices are very well-informed and articulate about the potential threats and dangers of radicalisation and extremism. They have a thorough understanding of how these pose an additional threat because of the sensitive nature of their work in the defence and security sector.

Staff provide highly effective initial information, advice and guidance to ensure that apprentices are on the right programme. Apprentices benefit from work placements in different areas of the business. This enables them to make informed decisions on which aspect of the business they wish to work in on completion of their apprenticeship. Apprentices do not always have sufficient knowledge of the wider range of progression routes available to them outside of the company.

In a very few instances, apprentices on the level 6 aerospace software engineering and level 4 engineering do not always have the opportunity to practise the knowledge and

skills they gain in their off-the-job training in a logical order. This hinders them in making rapid enough progress.

Leaders and managers use a range of information to gain a thorough and accurate oversight of apprentices' progress. Senior leaders set staff challenging targets to achieve and routinely monitor their progress against them. As a result, most apprentices, including those on courses provided by subcontractors, make excellent progress and develop substantial knowledge and skills as part of their apprenticeship.

Board members hold managers and subcontractors to account for the quality of provision. They provide managers and subcontractors with the support and challenge they need to continually improve the quality of their apprentices' training and education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior leaders ensure that the safeguarding of apprentices is a very high priority. The designated safeguarding leads have the appropriate training and experience to carry out their roles effectively.

Managers ensure that staff, including those of subcontractors, are recruited safely. Staff benefit from safeguarding training, including how to identify any potential mental health concerns. They know how to keep apprentices safe and comply with the company's procedures should they have any concerns about apprentices safety.

Apprentices say they feel safe and know who to go to if they have any concerns. Apprentices demonstrate they know how to keep safe while at work. For instance, they know the importance of considering their surroundings when carrying out tasks in the workplace and ensuring they use appropriate walkways to avoid getting too close to aircraft.

Provider details

Unique reference number	50592
Address	BAE Systems Channel Way Preston PR2 2YA
Contact number	0330 049 6413
Website	www.baesystems.com
CEO	Charles Woodburn
Provider type	Employer provider
Date of previous inspection	18 June 2010
Main subcontractors	Blackpool and the Fylde College Burnley College Fareham College Furness College Kaplan Financial Limited Humberside Engineering Training Association Limited IPS International Limited University of Central Lancashire University of Cumbria University of Portsmouth

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the Head of Apprenticeships and Skills, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff, subcontractors and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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