

# Inspection of Doosan Babcock Limited

Inspection dates:

12 to 14 April 2022

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
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Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
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Personal development	<b>Good</b>
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Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
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Apprenticeships	<b>Good</b>
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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## Information about this provider

Doosan Babcock is a private limited company operating in the engineering construction industry sector, providing specialist infrastructure and maintenance services to a wide range of clients across the UK and worldwide. The company employs approximately 2,000 people in the UK. The company became a levy-funded apprenticeship provider in January 2018.

At the time of the inspection, the company had 132 apprentices in learning, all on standards-based apprenticeship programmes at level 3. Most apprentices are adults, a few are younger apprentices aged under 19.

The very large majority of apprentices are following engineering construction pathways in pipe-fitting, rigging and welding. These apprentices undertake their initial training at the company's technical training centre located in Tipton in the West Midlands, before being deployed to client sites across the country. A very small minority of apprentices are training to become project control technicians. This provision is subcontracted to a regional college located in the West Midlands.

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

Apprentices receive their full entitlement in relation to all aspects of their training. The provision meets the requirements of apprenticeships fully.

Apprentices benefit from routine access to experienced and knowledgeable instructors and trainers who carefully plan and organise learning that enables them to develop occupationally specific skills, knowledge and behaviours that they confidently apply in their job roles to good effect.

Training staff ensure that apprentices undertake practical tasks carefully, so that they become self-assured and develop proficiency in using specialist tools and equipment to plan and sequence the assembly, welding and fabrication, and erection/installation of industrial engineering infrastructure at clients' sites across the United Kingdom.

Apprentices are enthusiastic about their learning and benefit from good-quality teaching and learning resources that help develop their vocational knowledge and technical skills. Apprentices routinely receive detailed and informative feedback provided by their instructors and trainers that sets out what they have done well and what they can do to improve their work.

Apprentices value the close support they receive from their instructors and trainers. They quickly develop positive attitudes to learning and consistently apply high standards of professional conduct in the workplace which meet employers' expectations. Apprentices' attendance at the training centre and in the workplace is consistently high.

Most apprentices develop high levels of self-confidence and precision regarding their use of mathematics. However, a small minority of apprentices make slow progress in developing their written English skills.

Apprentices are not provided with sufficiently comprehensive information about wider career possibilities which would help them better understand the full range of opportunities available at the end of their course.

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

Apprentices benefit from access to a curriculum that is well sequenced and taught by well-qualified vocational instructors and trainers who use their extensive industry experience to support apprentices in developing substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours to the high standards expected by industry.

In practical training workshops, instructors skilfully demonstrate a range of engineering techniques that apprentices then practise and repeat until they become competent. For example, apprentices in pipe-fitting and welding learn about how to

work safely at the start of the programme before moving on to develop their practical skills in how to weld steel plates of different thickness confidently, using manual and electric welding techniques. Instructors ensure that apprentices have a precise understanding of the different types of joints used in welding and fabrication and how to test the integrity of assembled engineering structures before they are allowed to work on site.

Instructors and trainers use ongoing assessment well to identify and, where relevant, correct misunderstandings in apprentices' technical learning, and to check how well they retain new knowledge. Training staff use these assessments well to adapt the curriculum until apprentices can successfully apply their new knowledge and skills into their everyday practice. For example, apprentices in project control are supported well by trainers to develop their knowledge and confidence in using techniques such as work-breakdown structure, critical path methods and environmental impact assessments, and how these can be applied successfully to live projects occurring in the workplace. Welding apprentices with prior knowledge of fabrication and welding are progressed quickly and moved on to more complex activities such as chrome and stainless welding. As a result, apprentices build on their existing skills in meaningful steps over time.

Most instructors and trainers provide apprentices with precise oral and written feedback on the standard of their work. They identify what apprentices have done well and what they need to do to improve. Consequently, most apprentices are able to fine-tune their practical and vocational skills development so that they make assured progress in their learning. However, not all training staff routinely report, using the recently developed internal apprenticeship tracking system, on the progress that apprentices achieve over time. Consequently, some apprentices are unclear about their overall development towards end-point assessment.

Instructors and trainers are adept at weaving mathematical content into the curriculum, so that apprentices develop a secure and purposeful appreciation of how these skills apply to their everyday practice. For example, apprentices in pipe-fitting know how to calculate the radii and tolerances accurately when assembling pipework. Apprentices in rigging develop precision in calculating the precise weight distribution of steel structures to ensure straps are placed in the appropriate position before lifting the load off the ground. However, while apprentices use technical language well, instructors and workplace mentors do not routinely support apprentices to develop fluency and precision in their written English skills, such as addressing issues of spelling, punctuation and grammar when producing technical reports for clients and internal use.

Apprentices routinely display positive attitudes to their learning and skills development and are highly motivated to achieve. Their attendance and timekeeping both at the training centre and in the workplace are routinely good. Apprentices enjoy their course and value highly the beneficial support and detailed guidance they receive from their instructors and trainers.

Apprentices quickly gain the respect of their colleagues and workplace mentors who support them well to consolidate and sharpen their vocational skills. They swiftly develop confidence in interacting with their peers and become more assured in carrying out their work to the standards expected of the industry. Apprentices become highly valued employees and contribute well to their employer's business.

Relationships between apprentices and staff responsible for their training and development reflect a positive respectful culture where bullying and harassment are not tolerated. Apprentices benefit from informative guidance provided by training staff regarding how to stay safe online and the importance of healthy eating and developing positive relationships at work and while working away from home. Apprentices benefit from routine access to confidential helplines, mental health champions and occupational health professionals regarding their health and well-being. As a result, apprentices feel safe and well supported at the training centre and at work.

Apprentices have a good understanding of the different health and safety requirements in the environments in which they work, such as training workshops and when working at clients' premises. For example, they have a good level of awareness of company protocols regarding zero tolerance to drugs and alcohol, and the heightened protection and security requirements when working at nuclear power generation plants and/or petrochemical sites. Although apprentices benefit from insightful safeguarding briefings about local risks when completing their initial training at the Tipton training centre, this is not consistently extended when they live independently at locations nearer to client sites.

Apprentices do not routinely receive impartial careers advice regarding the wider careers available outside of the company. A significant minority of apprentices have a limited understanding of their transferable skills or of the wider career opportunities available to them as they near completion of their training.

Leaders and managers have a strong commitment to, and high aspirations for, apprentices in meeting the workforce development needs of the business and the wider construction engineering sector. Senior leaders collaborate very effectively with a wide range of external partners to ensure that the apprenticeship curriculum is closely aligned to workforce skills linked to regional and national infrastructure projects associated with green and renewable energy. For example, they have adapted the curriculum, so that apprentices develop the knowledge, skills and understanding that enhance their employment opportunities associated with the decommissioning of coal-fired power stations, the building of carbon-capture installations, and the construction of nuclear power generation plants.

Leaders and managers evaluate the quality of the apprenticeship provision accurately, including that delivered through the subcontractor. Self-assessment involves staff at all levels and considers a wide range of evidence, leading to well-focused and concise evaluation of organisation-wide strengths and identification of appropriate targets for improvement. Leaders and managers respond well to employers' and apprentices' feedback on the improvements they need to make. For

example, they have introduced revision classes to help assist and prepare apprentices for the rigours and demands associated with end-point assessment.

Leaders and managers ensure that training staff links closely to organisation-wide curriculum and improvement priorities that support apprentices with their acquisition and mastery of industry-specific skills, knowledge and behaviours. Managers work closely with staff to ensure that they have the skills and confidence to support the effective implementation of standards-based apprenticeship qualifications.

Leaders promote an inclusive culture across the organisation. Since the previous inspection, leaders have actioned well-considered initiatives that have increased participation from underrepresented groups in the apprenticeship programme.

Directors and senior leaders, some of whom are ex-apprentices, use their industry insight and knowledge to support and challenge managers responsible for the training centre. They ensure that the apprenticeships are contributing to the company's workforce development priorities against which the effectiveness of the courses can be measured.

Leader's and managers' use of management information to aid their understanding of the delivery of the apprenticeship programme is not sufficiently comprehensive and requires further development. Recently introduced electronic tracking systems are not used consistently well for the systematic monitoring or tracking apprentices' progress across all aspects of their learning from starting points and over time.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a range of well-considered and effective procedures to assure the health, welfare and safety of apprentices. Managers carry out appropriate recruitment checks, including for their subcontractor, to assure the suitability of staff who work directly with apprentices. Apprentices benefit from extensive support, including access to mentoring, counselling, and mental health and welfare assistance, and they have a secure understanding of how to access help.

Training staff provide apprentices with clear guidance and direction on the importance of adhering to company and site-specific safety practices and the importance of respecting personal boundaries. Apprentices feel safe and have an appropriate level of understanding about matters such as harassment, or how to respond to incidents of unwanted attention, including when online.

Managers undertake regular checks regarding the suitability of accommodation used by apprentices when working away from home. Staff respond quickly and appropriately to any safeguarding and/or welfare concerns relating to apprentices.

The designated safeguarding lead is suitably trained and ensures incident logs record safeguarding concerns thoroughly. Where appropriate, prompt referral is

made to relevant external partners and agencies with a clear focus on the provision of help and protection for apprentices.

Leaders ensure that staff are alert to any emergent risks posed to apprentices, such as risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. For example, staff receive annual training so that they are vigilant for symbols used by some groups to promote extremist ideologies. Since the previous inspection, leaders have established a detailed 'Prevent' risk assessment and action plan that is informed by a range of local intelligence.

### **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Leaders and managers should ensure that instructors, trainers and workplace mentors routinely provide ongoing and targeted support for apprentices that challenges and extends their confidence in their written English skills in areas such as grammatical structure and the arrangement of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences.
- Leaders should develop and implement an effective strategy to ensure that all apprentices are routinely provided with appropriate guidance and support about local risk and vulnerabilities that they may encounter when they leave the training centre and seek accommodation closer to clients' work sites.
- Leaders and managers should improve the access that apprentices have to impartial information, advice and guidance so that they have a good level of understanding of their transferable skills and the wider employment options available to them as they near the end of the apprenticeship.
- Leaders should improve the tracking of apprentices' progress by ensuring that training staff routinely report on the progress that apprentices achieve over time using the recently developed apprenticeship tracking system. Managers must use accurate and timely information on key performance indicators so that they can intervene more swiftly when the progress of apprentices is slower than expected.

## **Provider details**

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<b>Principal/CEO</b>	Andrew Colquhoun
<b>Provider type</b>	Employer provider
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	13 and 14 January 2016
<b>Main subcontractor</b>	Warwickshire College Group

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the training manager, 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 and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

### Inspection team

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