

Inspection of The Military Preparation College for Training

Inspection dates:

12 to 15 July 2022

Overall effectiveness**Good**

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Education programmes for young people

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

Information about this provider

The Military Preparation College for Training (MPCT) provides employability courses for young people who want to join the military. MPCT works with the armed forces to help learners aged 16 to 19 prepare for the selection process to enter the Royal Navy, Royal Air Force or the Army. Learners study a level 2 qualification entitled preparation for military service, as well as functional skills qualifications in English and/or mathematics.

Approximately 1200 learners have completed courses this year. At the time of the inspection, 470 learners were studying in 21 training centres across England. Training centres are located on military bases, within general further education colleges, or based in city or town centres. MPCT also has training centres in Wales, which were not part of this inspection.

In October 2021 MPCT became part of Learning Curve Group.

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

Learners gain huge amounts of confidence and pride, and a sense of worth, because of the training they receive. Learners really enjoy their training, and the camaraderie of other learners and their staff. Learners thrive in the care of highly motivated staff, most of whom have military backgrounds and are excellent role models. Learners improve their fitness considerably in preparation for military fitness selection tests.

Because of the high expectations of staff, learners quickly develop the excellent standards of behaviour they need to succeed in the armed forces. Learners are very respectful to one another, staff and visitors. Staff create welcome and inclusive training centres where learners feel safe and confident to be themselves. Learners are motivated to do well and have highly positive attitudes to their learning. Learners demonstrate this positivity irrespective of their backgrounds, or any difficulties they may have faced in previous educational settings or in their home lives. Learners benefit from frequent contact with currently serving members of the armed forces, which provides them with a very good understanding of what careers are available to them.

Learners gain very useful skills and knowledge to help them succeed at military selection assessments, and in their future careers. Those who do not enter the military gain useful skills and attributes they can apply in their lives or other careers, such as teamwork, discipline, communication and how to live independently.

Most learners who are deemed medically fit for military service are successful at joining the armed force of their choice. Almost all of those who cannot join the armed forces gain alternative employment or go on to study elsewhere. A very high proportion of learners gain qualifications, including in English and mathematics. A few learners can achieve higher standards in their learning than staff provide.

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

Leaders and managers have used their excellent links with the armed forces to develop an effective curriculum that prepares learners well to join the military. Learners study a range of topics, such as parade drill, fieldcraft and fitness. They practice these skills effectively because instructors provide ample opportunities for them to do so. Throughout the course, staff place a high emphasis on developing the right behaviours and attitudes, so that learners develop these strongly and quickly. As a result, most learners who are medically able to do so are successful at gaining a place in initial military training. Learners who are unsuccessful in this are supported well to find alternative employment.

Leaders have developed a relevant course specific to the needs of the armed forces and for learners who wish to join the military. Staff at armed forces careers offices signpost learners who are not yet ready to join the military to MPCT training centres, so that they improve their chances of selection. MPCT managers have carefully

structured and sequenced the course so that learners develop the knowledge and skills they need no matter when they start or finish their studies. Learners can start the course at any time. The length of time learners spend at MPCT depends on when they can start their initial military training. Consequently, learners can spend a few weeks at MPCT, or more than a year. Almost all gain a level 2 qualification as an award, certificate or diploma, and work towards functional skills qualifications if appropriate.

Instructors use their expertise and knowledge to improve learners' understanding of physical requirements of the military and their individual fitness levels very effectively. Most instructors have gained qualifications in physical training that help them provide high-quality fitness training. Instructors teach learners skilfully so that learners develop the military knowledge and skills they need quickly, including learners with special educational needs and/or difficulties. For example, learners learn how to navigate using maps, and can estimate distances and angles when planning practice military exercises. Instructors ensure that learners understand the importance of wearing the right clothing and footwear for the prevailing conditions, and learn how to hydrate themselves properly. For a small number of more capable learners, instructors do not provide work that is difficult enough. For the few learners who may study at MCPT for longer than a year, managers do not provide opportunities for them to learn something new or in more depth.

As a result of the very good training and support their instructors provide, learners swiftly develop the character, resilience, and other positive attributes necessary to be successful in the armed forces, and in life. Learners develop their determination and ability to overcome tough challenges, such as the demanding physical tests necessary for entry into the military. Because of the opportunities that staff provide, learners rapidly increase their confidence and self-respect, and become active and responsible citizens in their communities. For example, learners undertake a range of activities to help their local areas or raise money for charity, including litter picks for the local community and planting poppies for Remembrance Day parades. Many learners were involved in supporting COVID-19 vaccination centres.

Instructors use thoughtful ways of developing learners' practical application of mathematical knowledge, for example calculating how much water is required to extinguish fires. Learners practice verbal communication frequently, through teamwork tasks or in presentations to others. Learners develop their written skills less well than their practical skills as instructors do not provide enough feedback on their work to help them improve.

Leaders and managers provide useful training to instructors so that they continually improve their teaching skills. For example, instructors complete a teaching preparation course every year, the most recent of which included how instructors can help learners overcome any barriers to learning. Instructors are well qualified, and most have, or are working towards, a suitable teaching qualification. Staff who are new to teaching undertake an extensive induction programme to ensure that they are well prepared for their roles.

Leaders do not ensure that a small minority of instructors receive effective support to teach functional skills effectively. Consequently, not all learners develop the knowledge they need to pass their functional skills qualifications at the level of which they are capable.

Instructors promote British values effectively, so that learners understand aspects such as mutual respect and rule of law, and how this applies to their everyday lives. Learners are taught the importance of respect and do not tolerate sexual harassment. Learners undertake a range of activities, including in the community, where they demonstrate their understanding of diversity irrespective of backgrounds, cultures and sexual orientations. Learners have a clear understanding of sexual consent and what constitutes a healthy relationship.

Appropriately qualified staff give learners useful and unbiased careers advice and guidance, including information on opportunities outside of the military. Where MPCT training centres are co-located in further education colleges, learners also benefit from advice and guidance from college staff. Because staff review career paths and general progress with learners frequently, learners understand the options available to them well. Some learners reconsider what they want to do in life, and staff support them to explore alternative options. Almost all learners either join the military or follow alternative career paths after they complete their training.

Most learners understand well the potential risks from extremist activity, including anti-military groups, and how to stay safe both in their locality and online. In a few training centres, learners do not know enough about the threats posed from various groups in their locations because staff have not discussed these with them.

Most learners understand, and demonstrate, the importance of sustaining high attendance and being punctual because staff set such high expectations. Leaders ensure that an effective, clearly defined procedure is followed for recording the attendance of learners, and they take prompt action to follow up any non-attendance.

The board of Learning Curve Group provides effective governance of MPCT. Board members are experienced in a range of relevant backgrounds, including education and training, finance and safeguarding. They have a good understanding of the strengths and weakness of MPCT because senior managers brief them frequently and effectively. Board members scrutinise and analyse information in detail and use this to hold managers to account well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior leaders have developed a positive and inclusive culture where staff and learners can and do report concerns. Relevant staff keep very detailed records on any concerns or complaints raised. Senior leaders are aware of any concerns and

what actions are taken, including the involvement of relevant external authorities. Leaders keep the governing board well informed about any safeguarding cases.

Leaders increased the numbers of designated safeguarding leads across the provision so that they can further ensure safeguarding processes are followed appropriately and that more support is available for learners and staff. These safeguarding leads are suitably qualified. Leaders ensure compliance with safeguarding legislation, including relevant checks for new and existing staff. Leaders provide staff with frequent and relevant safeguarding training, including on the 'Prevent' duty.

Staff ensure that learners are aware of what is and is not acceptable relating to sexual behaviour. Learners are confident that if they did have any concerns while in the training centres, or in their wider lives, they could speak to staff and know that staff will take appropriate action. Learners are adamant that, should any bullying, harassment or sexual abuse occur, it would be reported and dealt with swiftly.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Provide work that is more difficult for learners who are more capable so that they can deepen further their understanding of military topics, and English and mathematics.
- Provide further opportunities for learners who complete the diploma, but who are not yet able to join the military, to learn new or more in-depth knowledge and skills.
- Develop the confidence and knowledge of instructors who teach English and mathematics functional skills so that they improve the teaching of these subjects to learners.
- Improve the usefulness of the feedback that instructors provide to learners on their written work so that learners know what they need to do to improve.

Provider details

Unique reference number	58806
Address	MPCT House Oak Tree Court Cardiff CF23 8RS
Contact number	0330 111 3939
Website	www.mpct.co.uk
Principal/CEO	Brenda McLeish
Provider type	Independent learning provider
Dates of previous inspection	28 July to 1 August 2014
Main subcontractors	None

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy chief executive officer, 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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