

# Inspection of Ministry of Defence (Navy)

Inspection dates: 10 to 13 June 2025

## Overall effectiveness

**Good**

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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Apprenticeships	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Information about this provider

The Ministry of Defence (Navy) is an employer provider of apprenticeships for the Royal Navy. At the time of the inspection, there were about 7,300 apprentices in learning. Almost all new entrants to the Royal Navy enrol on an apprenticeship.

The Royal Navy offers apprenticeships in a range of subjects covering engineering, catering, logistics, information technology and military skills at levels 2, 3 and 4. The largest numbers of apprentices are on level 2 maritime mechanical and electrical mechanic, level 2 His Majesty's (HM) forces serviceperson, level 3 engineering technician and level 3 data technician apprenticeships.

Apprentices start their military training at HMS Raleigh or Commando Training Centre Royal Marines. They then move to one of five training establishments where they start their apprenticeship. They complete an extended period of off-the-job training, often lasting over 27 weeks, before they move to one of 382 front-line units for their on-the-job training. These locations include ships, submarines and sites outside the UK.

The apprenticeship provision is managed by a senior team located at HMS Collingwood. Most front-line units have at least one training officer who is responsible for the progress of apprentices at their unit.

The Royal Navy works with one subcontractor for theory teaching and English and mathematics.

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

Apprentices develop exceptional professional behaviours and attitudes to their work and professional lives. They work very hard and with determination to gain their qualifications. They are very proud of their achievements and value the skills they have gained. They behave with courtesy and respect towards each other, their instructors and officers. They are attentive in lessons and participate enthusiastically in training activities, helping each other when they encounter challenges.

Apprentices have high rates of attendance and punctuality to work and learning. When faced with difficulties and challenges in their training, they seek help from their peers or training staff. For example, level 3 data technician apprentices help each other when creating group permissions and applying them to manage users' permissions and network access.

Apprentices know how to keep themselves physically fit and healthy. They understand the importance of healthy eating and physical training for their roles in the Royal Navy. They enjoy taking part in a wide range of sporting and team games both on shore-side bases and when on board ships. They use the gymnasiums and fitness suites to exercise outside their working day.

Apprentices have a good understanding of healthy relationships, consent and unwanted sexual behaviours. Apprentices' behaviours exemplify fundamental British values. Apprentices are tolerant and respectful, and they recognise the value and importance of equality and diversity. Apprentices from foreign and commonwealth countries are made welcome by apprentices from the UK. They receive good support from Royal Navy staff to settle into their roles and keep in touch with their families.

Apprentices have a very good understanding of how their careers in the Royal Navy could progress. They know what further skills and training they need to gain promotions.

Apprentices develop their character and resilience because of their military and apprenticeship training. They know the importance of keeping themselves mentally healthy. They develop their self-confidence to work in teams in life-and-death situations such as putting out fires on aircraft onboard ships. Level 2 production chef apprentices learn to work in fast-paced galley kitchens onboard ships.

Apprentices know that bullying and harassment are not tolerated in the Royal Navy. They know that the very rare incidents that occur are dealt with decisively and promptly. Apprentices feel safe and receive appropriate and relevant training to stay safe. They learn how to stay safe on board ships, how to deal with fires and how to rescue sailors lost overboard. Apprentices know how to stay safe when leaving their bases or units.

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

The Royal Navy apprenticeship programme is supported by a clear strategic vision and strong leadership commitment. Senior officers regard apprenticeships as vital for maintaining a well-trained and operationally capable workforce. Leaders recognise that these qualifications are essential for almost all recruits entering apprenticeships, both for individual career development and national defence readiness.

Leaders, managers and instructors have planned the apprenticeship curriculums thoughtfully and logically. The curriculums link closely to the apprentices' initial trade training that takes place at one of five training establishments. The training that apprentices receive gives them the essential skills and understanding needed to be effective when they first join their front-line unit. In most cases, apprentices can practise their new skills when they learn them at their initial training establishment. They then apply and master these skills when they join their front-line unit. For example, level 2 maritime mechanical and electrical mechanic apprentices learn how to test mechanical, electrical and electro-technical systems. They then use these skills to diagnose and fix faults to maintain power equipment on board ships and submarines when they join their front-line unit.

On a few occasions, the front-line unit to which an apprentice is deployed is not able to provide the full range of tasks and equipment for an apprentice to complete their apprenticeship. Too often, the demands of the job restrict opportunities for apprentices when on their ship to complete tasks they have been trained to do. This can delay the completion of their apprenticeship.

Trainers use a range of teaching techniques to help apprentices understand often complex topics. They present information clearly, employing structured demonstrations that break down processes into manageable steps. For example, level 2 HM forces serviceperson apprentices were shown by their instructors how to clear a room during a lesson on close-quarter urban battle techniques. Apprentices were then able to practise this activity using their voices to communicate with each other. Once they had mastered the techniques, they repeated the activity in silence using just hand signals. Instructors check apprentices' learning using a range of questions that draw on apprentices' prior learning and encourage them to apply it to new learning.

Apprentices use excellent resources competently at work. For example, apprentices practise and use their skills in operational control rooms on board warships such as Type 45 destroyers. Level 2 aviation ground handler apprentices use dummy ships' decks and retired aircraft to practise extinguishing fires. However, resources such as the software that apprentices use in classrooms and workshops are occasionally outdated in comparison to what they use in their front-line units.

Apprentices produce work of a high standard in the classroom and practical environments. Written work in their portfolios is completed to a high standard and clearly illustrates their full understanding of and competence in tasks such as completing planned mechanical and electrical maintenance, fault finding and defect rectification. Apprentices gain highly valuable skills, many of which are transferable to civilian life if they choose to leave the Royal Navy in the future. While most apprentices receive helpful and constructive feedback on their written and practical work and in-progress reviews, there are instances where instructors' feedback to apprentices is not sufficiently precise or helpful. On these occasions, apprentices do not know well enough what they need to do to improve or to make better progress.

Managers and trainers prepare apprentices thoroughly for their final assessments. Apprentices on the level 2 HM forces serviceperson apprenticeship have an 'affairs folder' that details their training plan and contains their reflective journal. They use this to guide them in the professional discussion element of their final assessment.

Senior officers understand the importance and challenges of getting apprentices trained and prepared for their final assessments. However, their priority is to get highly trained personnel to the front line. They know the impact that operational demands of being at sea for nine months has on apprentices' progress and on achieving their apprenticeship in the planned timescale.

Senior officers have a thorough understanding of their areas for improvement. They have produced a comprehensive quality improvement plan that supports their actions for improvement. However, a few actions are not sufficiently specific or precise, and further work is needed to reduce the proportion of apprentices who have passed their planned end date.

Leaders and managers of the subcontracted provision have a good overview of the quality of the elements of the apprenticeship that they provide. Managers frequently observe activities such as induction sessions and progress reviews and set actions for improvement where these are necessary.

A high proportion of apprentices achieve their apprenticeship, with about a third achieving distinction grades where these are available. However, apprentices on a few apprenticeships such as level 3 information communications technician and level 3 data technician do not achieve as highly. Almost all apprentices stay in the Royal Navy on completion of the apprenticeship. Most choose to stay for many years, gaining promotion or alternative responsibilities.

Senior officers from the Royal Navy and leaders from the subcontractor work very effectively together. At their frequent meetings, they hold each other to account for improvements to the apprenticeship provision. Senior officers from the Royal Navy governance committees have a detailed understanding of the quality of the apprenticeship provision. They use their understanding to hold the officers responsible for the apprenticeship provision to account for improvements.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

- Reduce the proportion of apprentices who take longer than planned to complete their apprenticeship.
- Provide apprentices with the full range of training and operational opportunities in their front-line units to enable them to complete their apprenticeship.
- Provide apprentices with precise and helpful feedback on their work and in reviews so that they know what they need to do to improve.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	58403
<b>Address</b>	Naval Service Apprenticeship HQ Ramsay Building HMS Collingwood Newgate Lane Fareham PO14 1AS
<b>Contact number</b>	0300 1653672
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk">www.royalnavy.mod.uk</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Captain Danelle Ballard
<b>Provider type</b>	Employer
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 to 13 March 2018
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Capita

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the senior officer for pipeline accreditation, 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

Richard Pemble, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Richard Kirkham	His Majesty's Inspector
Michael Worgs	His Majesty's Inspector
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