



TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL

INSPECTION REPORT JUNE 2000

Flagship Training Limited

SUMMARY

Flagship Training Limited provides good engineering training and support for modern apprentices. The apprentices benefit from the outstanding resources available to them at the Royal Navy's training establishment, where they spend most of the first two years of their apprenticeship. All the apprentices are employed in prestigious engineering companies which work closely with Flagship Training Limited and the Royal Navy to provide a comprehensive apprenticeship. The apprentices have the opportunity to develop their team-building and leadership skills and acquire higher education qualifications. Flagship Training Limited gives high priority to equal opportunities and responds rapidly to equal opportunities issues which arise. However, apprentices show little awareness of the policy and procedures for equal opportunities. Training in the Royal Navy's establishment is well managed, but there has been a delay in bringing the management of some aspects of the training in the workplace to the same standard. Quality assurance systems for the training provided with the Royal Navy's facilities are well established and effective, but are insufficient for workplace training.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Engineering	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	2
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job training with excellent resources
- ◆ high retention rates
- ◆ high rates of achievement of higher education qualifications
- ◆ rapid response to equal opportunities issues
- ◆ good additional learning support and excellent recreational facilities
- ◆ well structured and closely managed off-the-job training
- ◆ continuous improvements in the quality of the training

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ initially slow progress towards achieving the NVQ at level 3
- ◆ low apprentices' awareness of equal opportunities policy or procedures
- ◆ ineffective management of key skills training and assessment
- ◆ lack of systematic sharing of good training practice in the workplace
- ◆ insufficient quality assurance of training in the workplace

INTRODUCTION

1. Flagship Training Limited began to provide training in 1996, when it entered a partnering agreement between the company, the Ministry of Defence and the Naval Recruiting and Training Agency (NRTA). The company has BAE Systems, Vosper Thornycroft and Johnsons Controls as its parent companies. The partnering agreement placed Flagship Training Limited in the unique position of being, in effect, the commercial training arm of the Royal Navy (RN). One of the company's key roles is to help the NRTA make more efficient use of the RN's 12 shore-based training establishments. This is achieved through service provision, private and public finance initiatives and income generation. The inspection was of the company's modern apprenticeship programme which receives government funding through the Hampshire Training and Enterprise Council (TEC).

2. The modern apprenticeship programme is unusual in that for the first two years the apprentices, although employed by sponsoring employers, are trained with the RN's apprentices at an RN training establishment. Apprentices move full time into their companies for the third year of training.

3. Most of the recruitment to the programme is conducted by employers, with Flagship Training's staff providing assistance and guidance as necessary. Apprentices are recruited from Hampshire, generally in areas close to the various employers. Unemployment in Hampshire is low at 3.2 per cent, although in the port areas of Fareham and Gosport, this rises to 4.9 per cent. The proportion of the Hampshire population from minority ethnic backgrounds is 0.7 per cent. In Fareham and Gosport, 2.2 per cent of the population are from minority ethnic backgrounds. In Hampshire in 1999, the proportion of school leavers achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 53.1 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. In 1999, 73 per cent of the 16 year olds in the area continued in full-time education. 10 per cent entered employment and 3 per cent started a modern apprenticeship.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

4. The company produced its first self-assessment report for the inspection in February 2000. The self-assessment process was carried out against the council’s framework in *Raising the Standard*. The report was primarily the work of the modern apprenticeship scheme manager, who attended several training events on self-assessment. All participants in the scheme were involved in the self-assessment, and the findings of the report were widely disseminated among them. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report, and with the grades given for equal opportunities, trainee support, the management of training and quality assurance. Inspectors identified additional strengths in the engineering provision and awarded a higher grade than that given in the report.

5. In June 2000, a team of three inspectors spent a total of nine days inspecting the on- and off-the-job training at Flagship Training Limited. Inspectors interviewed all members of the company’s apprenticeship training team, the company’s managers, RN training personnel, and employers’ managers and staff. They visited the two RN training establishments involved in the programme and four employers’ sites. The inspectors interviewed 21 apprentices, and met workplace assessors, internal verifiers and representatives of Hampshire TEC. They examined assessment records, apprentices’ files, portfolios and practical work, and numerous documents relating to the training and its management. Inspectors observed six on- and off-the-job training sessions. The following table shows the grade awarded for the training sessions observed.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Engineering		4	2			6
Total	0	4	2	0	0	6

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Engineering

Grade 2

6. Flagship Training Limited provides a three year modern apprenticeship in engineering. All the apprentices are employed by one of the seven major companies which work with Flagship Training Limited and sponsor the apprentices through the scheme. After an initial few weeks with their companies, the apprentices spend the first two years of their apprenticeship attending an RN training establishment full time. During these years, the apprentices work together with naval apprentices, towards an engineering foundation national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 2, a national certificate (NC) and a higher national diploma (HND) in electronic engineering. The apprentices also return to

their employers for short periods of work experience. On completion of the foundation training, the apprentices undertake the third year of their apprenticeship with their employers, where they work towards achievement of the NVQ at level 3. At the time of the inspection, there were 34 trainees on the programme. Of these, 26 were in the first two years of the apprenticeship, and eight in the workplace in the third year of the scheme. Qualified RN staff and civilian instructors provide the training in the first two years of the programme, including the NC and HND programmes which cover the theoretical aspects of the apprenticeship. Most of the employers have qualified NVQ assessors in the workplace. Flagship Training Limited provides assessment and internal verification to those employers who require it. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the company's self-assessment report and identified additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors awarded a higher grade for this aspect of provision than that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ outstanding training resources
- ◆ high standard of off-the-job training
- ◆ good retention and achievement rates
- ◆ good employer placements
- ◆ trainees' achievement of higher-level qualifications

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ missed opportunities to gather evidence for key skills
- ◆ slow progress towards achievement of NVQs at level 3

7. Flagship Training Limited's apprentices benefit from the excellent facilities and resources of the naval training establishment. Workshops are equipped to a high standard. Naval equipment provides the apprentices with the opportunity to work on high precision, high specification systems. The apprentices rapidly develop competence in the use of hand tools and basic engineering processes. Good use is made of project work to ensure that practical experience is gained across a wide variety of engineering skills. There are good resources for computer-aided design, for the maintenance and repair of computer equipment, and for basic software programming. Classrooms are well equipped with both stand-alone and networked computer stations, which allow access to the internet for technical research. Towards the end of the NVQ level 2 programme and HND trainees are encouraged to work in teams to design and test technical projects involving electro-mechanical engineering. This project work also helps to develop key skills such as communication, problem-solving and the application of information technology and number. Employers provide materials and technical support for some projects. Some workshops have the equipment needed for hydraulic ac/dc modules. Well-qualified and experienced staff teach the HND in

engineering and the theoretical knowledge for the NVQ. A well-resourced library provides trainees with study materials and job-search facilities.

8. All on and off-the-job training is well documented and structured to meet the needs of both the trainees and their employers. Off-the-job training is provided in three phases, the foundation programme, the HND and the NVQ at level 3. The NVQ level 2 programme is assessed in the naval training establishment. Assessment is carried out by staff recruited by the RN, who are responsible for the NVQ assessment centre. They cater for both naval and civilian apprentices. Most assessment is based on statements written by training instructors, who have witnessed the work being competently carried out by the apprentices. Some instructors are not qualified assessors. In other instances, assessment is by direct observation. Portfolios of evidence are comprehensive and well organised. The staff of the NVQ centre regularly provides good support for portfolio building, and trainees are given thorough written feedback. In most companies, employees trained by Flagship Training Limited as work-based assessors are responsible for assessing the work carried out by apprentices to meet the requirements of the NVQ at level 2. Some companies carry out internal verification. Flagship Training Limited staff provide internal verification for others. Apprentices are closely monitored at all stages and are well aware of their performance and progress. They have a clear and detailed understanding of the NVQ process.

9. During the first year of the programme, six apprentices left the programme before completing it. Four left having achieved an NVQ at level 2 and two left with no qualifications. The provider responded by analysing the causes of early leaving, and made changes to the initial assessment programme. Retention rates have since increased to 95 per cent. At the time of the inspection no trainees had completed their full modern apprenticeship although some 26 per cent had moved on to the NVQ level 3 qualification. All these apprentices have achieved their NVQs at level 2 and their NC's, and are making good progress towards their other qualifications.

10. All of the employers and Flagship are members of a training consortium. They fully support the programme both financially and by allowing trainees to attend training with Flagship Training Limited and the RN for the first two years of the programme. Before they begin training at the RN establishment, apprentices spend a short period with their employer and receive a full induction into the company. Most employers have a formal training plan and, in most cases, the training centres on the requirements of the NVQ. Employers often visit the provider to discuss their apprentices' progress. Apprentices are encouraged to return to the companies for short periods during the first two years of the programme.

11. Flagship Training Limited provides an apprenticeship which includes an HND as the additional qualification element of the modern apprenticeship framework. This is valued by both the employer and the apprentices. The provider has developed a partnership arrangement with a local university. As a result the university has agreed to provide an unconditional place for all successful apprentices who wish to study for a degree in engineering.

12. The provider focuses on the assessment and accreditation of key skills when trainees are registered for the NVQ at level 3, on their return to their employers in the third year. Before this, the apprentices are not well informed about the requirements for evidence for key skills. Little emphasis is placed on them during the induction to the NVQ. As a result opportunities are missed to gather evidence in the early stages of the programme. The third year apprentices in the workplace were slow to start gaining accreditation for their NVQ at level 3. There was an initial delay in identifying appropriate evidence and arranging assessments. The provider identified these problems at the time of the inspection and progress was being made towards overcoming them.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

13. Flagship Training Limited has a clearly written equal opportunities policy, which is regularly reviewed and was being rewritten at the time of the inspection. Apprentices are also protected by the policies and procedures of the RN and their employers during their apprenticeship. The commitment to equality of opportunity is clearly stated in the promotional materials produced by Flagship Training Limited and the associated companies. There is a clearly detailed complaints procedure which staff and apprentices understand. Apprentices do not have a copy of Flagship Training Limited's equal opportunities policy and, in some cases, remembered little of its inclusion in their induction. At the time of the inspection, there were no apprentices from minority ethnic backgrounds. Inspectors found different strengths and weaknesses from those identified in the company's self-assessment report, but gave the same grade for this aspect of provision as that awarded in the report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ effective action planned and taken to address equality of opportunity
- ◆ high priority for the management of equal opportunities
- ◆ rapid response to remove identified barriers to access
- ◆ extensive review and update of equal opportunities policy and procedures

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ low awareness of equal opportunities by trainees
- ◆ no coverage of equality of opportunity at the induction of the original intake
- ◆ insufficient monitoring and analysis of data relating to equal opportunities

14. Flagship Training Limited has taken a major initiative to address some equality of opportunity issues which it identified during the process of self-assessment. A senior member of staff who is responsible for equality of opportunity has received the company's systems and documents, and has devised a detailed action plan. Many of these planned actions had been put into practice by the time of the inspection. Equal opportunities monitoring forms have been produced, a new database has been established, and a thorough induction to equal opportunities has been designed for apprentices. At the time of the inspection, booklets about harassment were being produced, and all other equal opportunities documents were being revised. Some staff have received some equal opportunities training, which is now included in all staff development programmes for managers.

15. While at the RN's training establishment, apprentices are also protected by the RN's policies and procedures. Equality of opportunity is given a high priority by the RN. The equal opportunities team meets regularly. The meetings are chaired by the Commodore, and attended by a representative from Flagship Training Limited. The Commodore has issued an equal opportunities policy statement to all personnel on the base, clearly stating that he is responsible for implementing equal opportunities on the site, and explaining his view of equal opportunities. The Commodore has produced his own action plan which is being put into practice.

16. Some buildings do not have access for people with restricted mobility. However, when a need for this access is identified, the response is fast and comprehensive. Access to many classrooms and training areas has recently been modified to allow wheelchair access. Two apprentices who failed the RN medical tests and would have been excluded from naval training have been placed on the civilian apprenticeship with Flagship Training Limited. At the time of the inspection, three apprentices identified as having dyslexia had been assessed by specialists and given additional help.

17. Apprentices have a low awareness of equal opportunities issues. They have not received a copy of the company's equal opportunities policy. Equal opportunities were not included in Flagship Training Limited's induction of some apprentices. There is little recording of equal opportunities data or analysis of statistics and trends. There is no monitoring of ethnicity, disability or gender in relation to recruitment and achievement. There is no targeting of under-represented groups in recruitment. At the time of the inspection, there was one female apprentice.

Trainee support

Grade 2

18. Apprentices are recruited jointly by Flagship Training and their sponsoring companies. All apprentices undertake the full RN selection tests, followed by individual interviews. Flagship Training Limited is strongly committed to supporting apprentices towards achievement of their qualifications. Off-the-job support procedures are well established and effective. Trainees have access to, and

make good use of, a wide range of support services and sport and recreation facilities at the RN's training establishment. The additional support given to apprentices is often not recorded. There is a favourable trainee to staff ratio at the RN's training establishment. Inspectors found additional strengths and weaknesses to those identified in the self-assessment report, but gave the same grade as the report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good additional learning support
- ◆ individual mentoring in the workplace
- ◆ wide range of personal development opportunities for trainees
- ◆ outstanding recreational facilities for trainees
- ◆ recognition and celebration of trainees' achievements

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ lack of systematic recording of additional support
- ◆ insufficient focus on progression in reviews

19. Flagship Training Limited and employers recognise and celebrate apprentices' achievements. At the completion of training at the RN's training establishment, there is a formal passing out ceremony. This is attended by the apprentices and their families and senior figures from both the RN and industry. National certificates and Flagship Training Limited's own certificates are formally presented to the apprentices. Open evenings for families are held about twice each year. Similar functions attended by Flagship Training Limited's staff are held at the apprentices' companies.

20. Apprentices who fail modules during their programme receive immediate and appropriate additional learning support designed to meet their individual needs. The support may include one-to-one tuition, additional classes, and movement to a different class or specialist support. The very small number of apprentices who fail a module a second time are reassessed.

21. Flagship Training Limited apprentices are able to make use of the RN's outstanding sport and recreational facilities. Most sports are available. Apprentices can be selected to play for RN teams and take part in RN events. The civilian apprentices enjoy participating in these activities. There is a healthy rivalry between them and the naval apprentices. As well as sports facilities, there are numerous clubs and societies which Flagship Training Limited's apprentices can join. The apprentices participate fully, and appreciate these facilities. Flagship Training Limited's apprentices are offered residential accommodation in the RN's training establishment. At the time of the inspection, two civilian apprentices were living in this accommodation.

22. All apprentices are allocated a mentor in the workplace. The mentor is usually a senior employee from the company which employs the apprentice. The mentor visits the apprentice once a month while at the RN's training establishment and helps apprentices to progress, and also help the apprentice to maintain contact with the company. In the workplace mentors are in daily contact with apprentices, and supervise their daily workload and its relevance. Each mentor is responsible for one trainee.

23. All apprentices take part in various personal development exercises. In their first year at the RN's training establishment, they attend the RN's outdoor leadership training course, in the Brecon Beacons in Wales. The course consists of two one-week sessions. It is designed to develop leadership skills and problem-solving ability. Apprentices are also encouraged to enter national competitions. Two naval and three civilian apprentices recently entered the Skill Electronic national competition. One of the RN's and one of the Flagship Training Limited's apprentices came joint second. They were proceeding to the national finals to be held at the ManPower National Skills Festival at the National Exhibition Centre in July 2000.

24. Although extensive additional learning support is provided for apprentices, most of it is not recorded. Much of the support is provided in response to an immediate need and is not implemented through any formal procedure. Reviews of progress take place monthly. These are thoroughly recorded in a report. The report includes a statement of the apprentices' achievements to date. However, the review process does not primarily focus on the apprentices' progress, or set targets to be achieved before the next review. There is no pastoral content in the review. However, pastoral support is quickly and effectively provided when a need is identified.

Management of training

Grade 3

25. Flagship Training Limited's modern apprenticeship programme is managed by the scheme manager. He reports to the company's training support manager, who has a wider responsibility for all the training which the company carries out in the RN's training establishment. The training support manager reports to the company's general manager who is responsible for all the company's activities. Two members of staff are responsible for providing support for the apprentices, conducting progress reviews and recording and reporting their progress and achievements. Flagship Training Limited managers work closely with RN and Ministry of Defence (MoD) personnel in the first two years of the apprenticeship to provide a programme which meets the needs of the civilian apprentices and their sponsoring companies. During the third year of the apprenticeship, Flagship Training Limited's staff regularly visit workplaces and meet the employers' training staff and apprentices' supervisors to ensure that the training workplace meets apprentices' needs. Flagship Training Limited has achieved the Investors in People award. As well as developing its own staff, the company has provided

extensive development for employers' staff who have qualified as workplace assessors. The structure and management of the modern apprenticeship programme has been modified in each of the three years it has existed in response to feedback from staff, employers and apprentices, and it continues to evolve. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified by the company in its self-assessment report, but found additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with the grade given in the report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ clearly structured training
- ◆ good management of off-the-job training
- ◆ good informal communications between the company and its RN partners
- ◆ accurate and extensive records of training

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ unclear roles and responsibilities in workplace training
- ◆ slow response to identified deficiencies
- ◆ ineffective management of key skills training and assessment

26. The programme of on- and off-the-job training is clearly structured and documented. Apprentices are knowledgeable about what is required of them at each stage of training. Off-the-job training in the RN's workshops, is divided into modules. Apprentices know exactly what they are required to achieve in each module and how they will be trained and supported in achieving it. The RN and MoD training staff work closely with the scheme manager to ensure that apprentices achieve both the aspects of the programme which are common to the RN's apprentices and those which are specific to Flagship Training Limited's civilian apprentices.

27. Accurate records are maintained throughout training so that apprentices have a clear understanding of their progress and staff know where to direct additional support if necessary. All aspects of the apprentices' performance are closely monitored. There is some healthy rivalry between the civilian and naval apprentices. Following some negative comments from the first intake of apprentices, Flagship Training Limited and the RN training personnel modified the delivery of training in their training establishment to ensure greater integration of civilian and naval apprentices. Several apprentices and their employers commented on the subsequent improvement in attendance, punctuality and general demeanour of apprentices early in their training. In their view, the civilian apprentices benefit from association with the RN's apprentices who are subject to a highly disciplined approach to their training.

28. Flagship Training Limited's managers meet with the RN's training personnel regularly. Minutes are kept, and the actions to be taken are recorded. The

implementation of these actions is monitored. Many of the actions taken to improve training arise from the frequent informal discussions between the RN's training staff and the company's scheme manager. Flagship Training Limited and RN staff work co-operatively in managing the programme for the maximum benefit of the apprentices.

29. On-the-job training is generally of a high standard. Employers play a key role in the training and subsequent assessment of apprentices' competence in the workplace. However, many apprentices have made slow progress in the workplace. Their progress has been hampered by a lack of clarity in the roles and responsibilities of Flagship Training Limited staff and the employers' staff for training to meet the requirements of the NVQ at level 3, and for assessing apprentices' competence in the workplace. Flagship Training Limited scheme managers have identified the areas of confusion and are working with the employers to remedy the situation for the third year apprentices, and to prevent a repetition for future apprentices. A new contract between employers and the company has been agreed on. It has clearly defined service level agreements which replace the original broadly-drawn agreement.

30. Flagship Training Limited left the accreditation of key skills for the first intake of apprentices until their third year of training. They then made slow progress towards accreditation. Apprentices contrast this with their rapid progress in off-the-job training. The company has recently collaborated with employers to reduce the delay. Managers have recognised the need to introduce the identification of suitable evidence for key skills before the third year of the programme. However, they have been slow to make the changes to the programme's structure which they have agreed.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

31. Many of the quality assurance arrangements for the modern apprenticeship programme fit within Flagship Training Limited's and the RN establishment's frameworks for the ISO 9001 quality standard. The off-the-job training provided at the naval training establishment is subject to clearly defined quality assurance processes which have been developed over many years. The quality assurance processes for off-the-job training make use of regular input from apprentices and trainers on the quality of all aspects of training. Evaluation and review of the programme of off-the-job training is frequent and the results are used to help plan changes to the programme. Flagship Training Limited has a clearly defined quality assurance policy and associated procedures, but quality assurance for training in the workplace has only recently become a priority. Although the self-assessment report did not define strengths and weaknesses for this aspect of the provision in bullet points, the text clearly identified key strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses referred to in the report and identified additional strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agreed with the grade given in the report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ continuous improvement in off-the-job training
- ◆ impact of trainees' views on off-the-job training
- ◆ thorough evaluation and enhancement of training
- ◆ critical and accurate self-assessment

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ weak monitoring of training and assessment quality in some companies
- ◆ no systematic sharing of good practice in the workplace
- ◆ no feedback from trainees or employers during level 3 NVQ training
- ◆ some external verifier reports unknown to the provider

32. At the end of each module of off-the-job training, which may be as often as every week, the apprentices complete a questionnaire seeking their views on the ways in which the training could be improved. The questionnaire also provides the opportunity for apprentices to comment on any aspect of their training at each stage. The training staff and managers review this feedback. When a problem is identified, the training programme is appropriately modified. In the three years during which the programme has been running, many aspects of the programme have been changed, and retention and achievement rates have improved. The views of apprentices and their employers are obtained at the end of the on-the-job training, but there is no systematic collection or analysis of their views during the training.

33. There is a thorough annual review of the off-the-job training programme and its related theoretical classes. Retention, progress and achievement rates are considered in the light of feedback from trainers and apprentices. Feedback from internal and external verification is also one of the sources of information used to improve the programme.

34. The internal verification of the NVQ assessments at the RN's establishment is thorough and well documented. The verifiers' reports contribute to the consistency of NVQ assessment standards and assessors share good practice. Many employers have workplace assessors, and one company is a registered assessment centre. Few assessments of competence at NVQ level 3 have yet been carried out in the workplace, and internal verification in the workplace is at an early stage of development. Assessment and internal verification are thorough in the company which is registered as an assessment centre, but Flagship Training Limited has no system for reviewing the centre's quality. The company does not routinely provide a copy of its external verifiers' reports to Flagship Training Limited and it does not contribute to the overall assurance of quality. There is too little monitoring of quality of training and assessment in the workplace by Flagship Training Limited.

35. The companies employing Flagship Training Limited's apprentices provide good training and have collaborated to solve some of the problems experienced with their first intake from the RN training establishment. However, Flagship Training Limited does not have a process of ensuring that good practice is shared between the companies. Many have had to develop their own solutions to problems similar to those already encountered and solved by other sponsoring companies.

36. Flagship Training Limited has an open and critical approach to self-assessment. Scheme managers have identified the main weaknesses in their quality assurance system, which are mainly found in the quality assurance at workplace training. The company is working closely with the employers to address the identified issues. Although there was a delay in progress towards the achievement of the NVQ at level 3 by apprentices when they first arrived in the workplace, subsequent changes have already improved the situation. Employers and apprentices expect that the apprentices will achieve their NVQs at level 3 by the end of their modern apprenticeship programme. The action planning resulting from the self-assessment process set realistic targets for quickly resolving the issues affecting the progress of third-year apprentices.