

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **The Royal Air Force**

**25 February 2005**



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

## Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and Jobcentre Plus programmes. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

## Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

## Overall judgement

Where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

- more than one third of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas, **or**
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory.

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

# INSPECTION REPORT

## The Royal Air Force

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## INSPECTION REPORT

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. The Training Group Defence Agency (TGDA) is part of the Royal Air Force (RAF) Personnel and Training Command based at RAF Innsworth, near Gloucester. It is responsible for the recruitment and selection of all RAF personnel and for non-operational training. The aim of the TGDA is to support the operational effectiveness of the RAF by providing military and civilian personnel, trained to appropriate standards. The TGDA's flying and ground training tasks are similar to those of civilian airline and aerospace companies. Its portfolio of flying courses for aircrew provides elementary, basic and advanced flying training for fast jet, rotary-wing and multi-engine aircraft, and in partnership with its contractors, it operates a fleet of more than 300 aircraft and employs just over 6,000 people.

2. The TGDA provides a range of training similar to that provided by the further and higher education sectors. There is work-based learning for young people on advanced apprenticeships and apprenticeships in 15 different RAF ground trade groups at 15 RAF ground training schools. These programmes are funded by the RAF's contract with the National Contracts Service of the Learning and Skills Council.

3. There are 4,147 advanced apprentices and 1,403 apprentices currently on the programmes and there are 310 dedicated accreditation staff involved in the RAF apprenticeship scheme. Most of the accreditation staff are based at the ground training schools and their duties include assessment, verification, administration, management and co-ordination of the relevant apprenticeship scheme. These staff include 35 apprenticeship co-ordinators and 70 full-time assessors at main operating bases who support, in particular, engineering sector learners and part-time vocational assessors.

4. There is a central TGDA management and co-ordination team comprising nine RAF and civil service staff which covers areas of policy, finance, management information, quality assurance and learner liaison. This team is based at RAF Innsworth and is responsible for the overall performance of the RAF apprenticeship scheme, for accessing government funding and for liaising with the Learning and Skills Council. TGDA's role in accreditation is to determine policy and provide guidance and support to the RAF ground training schools.

5. The ground training schools run as autonomous units, with direction, guidance and support from the TGDA. They are responsible jointly to their RAF trade sponsor and the TGDA. Day-to-day management is carried out by staff in the accreditation group at each school. They are responsible for reviewing the policies and procedures for their programmes.

## SCOPE OF PROVISION

### **Engineering, technology & manufacturing**

6. There are 4,086 learners on engineering programmes. Of these, 3,107 are on advanced apprenticeships in engineering maintenance at the Defence College of Aeronautical Engineering, RAF Cosford, and the remainder are on advanced apprenticeships in communications, electronics and telecommunications operation at No 1 Radio School, part of the Defence College of Communications and Information Systems at RAF Cosford. The RAF also offers an apprenticeship in telecommunications engineering at the Aerial Erector School, Defence College of Communications and Information Systems, RAF Digby. Programmes for learners at the aeronautical engineering college include aircraft avionics and electrics, aircraft engine and airframe technology, aircraft weapons systems and safety equipment. Current learners complete key skills training and most of the technical certificate requirements in full-time study during their time at the training colleges at RAF Cosford. This stage of training varies between 26 to 65 weeks, depending on the trade area. On completion of their college-based training, learners are dispersed among 20 operational stations, where they complete a national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 3 and the remaining units of the technical certificate. Learners are supported in their learning at the training college by teams of specialist instructional staff, both military and civilian. During the work-based phase of their training they are supported by a team of 99 work-based assessors and 27 internal verifiers. There are a further 16 staff working towards assessor and internal verifier qualifications. A subcontracted specialist-training provider provides additional key skills support for work-based learners.

### **Business administration, management & professional**

7. There are 388 apprentices on programmes in personnel administration, medical administration and catering accounts. Personnel administrators achieve the bulk of the NVQ during their off-the-job training and the rest of their framework in the workplace. Medical administrators and catering accountants achieve key skills qualifications during their initial off-the-job training and acquire the NVQ once they have been posted to an operational station.

8. Off-the-job training is carried out in one of three schools. Learners in personnel administration and catering accounts train in the Secretarial Training School, Defence College of Police and Personnel Administration at RAF Halton and at the Defence Food Services School, Defence College of Logistics at RAF Halton. Medical administrators are trained at the Director General Medical Services (RAF), Defence Medical Services Training Centre at Keogh Barracks. A team of accreditation implementation advisers is linked to each of the three disciplines and based at the schools to co-ordinate on-the-job learning. These teams act as roving assessors and oversee progress reviews. They visit each RAF unit at least quarterly. Internal verification is carried out centrally at the schools.

## **Information & communications technology**

9. There are 329 learners on information and communications technology (ICT) apprenticeships employed at 24 RAF stations across the country. They are all working towards key skills qualifications and NVQs at level 2, 247 of them in Using information technology (IT) and the remainder in IT User. The RAF provides training for the apprenticeship at three schools, the School of Fighter Control at RAF Boulmer, the Joint School of Photographic Interpretation at Chicksands, and the Central Air Traffic Control School at RAF Shawbury. Thirty-seven per cent of the current learners are at the School of Fighter Control, 26 per cent at the Joint School of Photographic Interpretation and 37 per cent at the Central Air Traffic Control School. Trade training takes from eight to 12 weeks, and begins with an induction programme. The apprenticeship framework is scheduled to take 35 hours of the training period. Many learners now make substantial progress towards achieving their key skills qualifications during this period. On successful completion of the trade training learners are posted to their first operational unit. Each school has specific staff responsible for the operational management of the apprenticeship scheme.

## **Retailing, customer service & transportation**

10. The RAF provides off-the-job trade training for 80 apprentices in transportation. They follow NVQs in handling air passengers, aircraft loading and providing airside ramp services. Off-the-job training takes place at the Defence Movements School, Defence College of Logistics, RAF Brize Norton and is followed by on-the-job training in operational stations. The specialist trade training follows nine weeks of initial RAF training which includes initial and key skills assessments. The off-the-job trade training covers background knowledge, some practical instruction, and key skills. It takes 22 weeks and the on-the-job training takes a further 18 months. Transportation apprentices are assessed in the workplace by qualified NVQ assessors, many of whom are line managers.

11. One hundred and thirty-three learners are following apprenticeship programmes in distribution, warehousing and storage operations. Their trade training is carried out initially at the Logistics and Supply Training Squadron, Defence College of Logistics, RAF Halton, and subsequently at one of a number of RAF operational units across the United Kingdom. The planned duration of the apprenticeship programme was two years, but has recently been halved. Recruits have nine weeks of basic RAF training before they join the training squadron. Their off-the-job training takes 12 weeks and is followed by three months on-the-job training at their operating bases. All NVQ assessment takes place at the training squadron, and is carried out by qualified staff with occupational experience.

## **Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel**

12. There are 133 learners on hospitality and catering programmes with 17 assessors and three internal verifiers. Two-thirds of the hospitality learners are apprentices in food preparation and one-third in food and drink service. On sports programmes there are 51 learners on advanced apprenticeships who are supported by four assessors, two internal verifiers and 10 staff instructors. All learners spend nine weeks on the RAF recruit training course before they start their specialist training.

13. Hospitality and catering learners start their trade training with the Catering Training Squadron of the Defence Food Services School at RAF Halton. Here they learn background knowledge, develop their practical skills and achieve technical certificates and key skills qualifications. Learners in food preparation and cooking spend 17 weeks at the school, and learners in food and drink service, nine weeks. Learners who have successfully completed their training at the school are posted to operational stations. Their NVQ units are assessed at their posting stations in a real working environment.

14. Sports learners attend the School of Physical Training at RAF Cosford for their specialist training as RAF physical training instructors. They work towards level 3 NVQs in coaching, teaching and instruction as part of their apprenticeship. They spend nine months in off-the-job training before they are posted to their operational station. During this time they work towards the apprenticeship framework, completing key skills qualifications, industry awards, most of the technical certificate and aspects of the NVQ. At the end of the training, learners graduate as RAF physical training instructors.

## **Health, social care & public services**

15. The RAF provides apprenticeships in the secure environment for learners at the RAF Police Training School, Defence College of Police and Personnel Administration at RAF Halton, and the RAF Regiment Training School at RAF Honington. There are 26 RAF Police learners and 314 RAF Regiment learners. All learners are recruited through Armed Forces Careers Offices following the same procedures for recruitment, selection, initial assessment and induction as all other RAF apprentices. Following induction, learners complete an intensive period of trade training lasting 22 weeks for the RAF Police and 20 weeks for the RAF Regiment. They are assessed for some of the key skills, the technical certificate and NVQ units during this phase. The remainder of the apprenticeship is completed when learners are posted to operational units throughout the RAF, and assessed in the workplace. Progress reviews are at 12-weekly intervals.

## Visual & performing arts & media

16. There are 10 RAF learners on advanced apprenticeship programmes in photography, four of whom are women. They are part of a group of 22 learners from all three services. Most of their training takes place at the Defence School of Photography, a tri-service establishment, at RAF Cosford. At the beginning of the programme learners spend a week away from RAF Cosford on a residential team-building exercise.

17. The programme is scheduled to take 28 weeks and comprises a level 3 NVQ in digital photography and imaging, three units of an NVQ at level 3 in photo processing, level 2 key skills and a defence technical certificate. Learners receive an induction into the school and the apprenticeship framework, and take an initial assessment to identify their key skills and additional support needs. There are eight members of staff on the teaching team, who are civilian and service personnel. The course is made up of approximately two-thirds practical activities and one-third background knowledge. Most practical activities take place at RAF Cosford. The base provides a wide range of photo shoot opportunities including events, promotion work and publicity, and has extensive technical facilities. The apprenticeship programme includes trips to outside locations including stately homes and museums. The learners use part of their own time to complete photographic assignments which contribute to the course units.

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

Number of inspectors	29
Number of inspection days	246
Number of learners interviewed	492
Number of staff interviewed	381
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	78

## OVERALL JUDGEMENT

18. The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the quality of work-based learning is outstanding in visual and performing arts and media, good in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, and retailing, customer service and transportation, satisfactory in business administration, management and professional, and ICT, and unsatisfactory in engineering, technology and manufacturing, and health, social care and public services. The RAF's leadership and management are unsatisfactory as are its quality assurance arrangements. Its approach to equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

**GRADES**

*grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak*

<b>Leadership and management</b>		<b>4</b>
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality assurance		4

<b>Engineering, technology &amp; manufacturing</b>		<b>4</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Other contributory areas</b> - Apprenticeships for young people	4086	4

<b>Business administration, management &amp; professional</b>		<b>3</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Business administration</b> - Apprenticeships for young people	388	3

<b>Information &amp; communications technology</b>		<b>3</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Using IT</b> - Apprenticeships for young people	342	3

<b>Retailing, customer service &amp; transportation</b>		<b>2</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Transportation</b> - Apprenticeships for young people	80	1
<b>Warehousing and distribution</b> - Apprenticeships for young people	133	3

<b>Hospitality, sport, leisure &amp; travel</b>		<b>2</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Hospitality and catering</b> - Apprenticeships for young people	133	2
<b>Leisure, sport and recreation</b> - Apprenticeships for young people	51	1
<b>Health, social care &amp; public services</b>		<b>4</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Public services</b> - Apprenticeships for young people	340	4
<b>Visual &amp; performing arts &amp; media</b>		<b>1</b>
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Other contributory areas</b> - Apprenticeships for young people	10	1

## KEY FINDINGS

### Achievement and standards

19. **Retention on engineering programmes are good.** In 2000-01 and 2001-02, retention was 94 per cent. Of all the learners who started since 2000-01, 92 per cent have either been retained or are still on programme.

20. **There is good achievement of key skills by learners on basic engineering programmes.** Since the timing of the key skills training was changed, the success rate for engineering learners graduating from the two colleges is 100 per cent.

21. The achievement rate for engineering NVQs is satisfactory. Currently, 59 per cent of learners in the workplace have completed their NVQ. **Framework completion rates for advanced apprentices in engineering are poor.** For learners starting in 2000-01 and 2001-02 the rates are 4 per cent and 3 per cent respectively.

22. **In business administration there has been consistently high retention** over the past three years, averaging 82 per cent. All learners starting in the year 2004-05 are still in learning.

23. **The NVQ achievement rate in business administration is good.** All the personnel administrators recruited in 2002-03 and 2003-04 have achieved their NVQs, and the 2004-05 starters are making good progress. Catering accountants and medical

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administrators who work towards the NVQ in their workplace have a much slower rate of achievement. **Business administration learners make slow progress towards completing their apprenticeship frameworks and the approach to target-setting is weak.** There has been a downward trend in completions since 2001-02.

24. **Retention in ICT is very good at all three schools.** During the period 2000-01 to 2002-03 retention was 88 per cent. Of the learners starting in 2003-04 and 2004-05, 10 per cent have completed their framework and a further 70 per cent are still in learning.

25. Achievement rates in ICT are satisfactory. However, the overall rates mask **very good achievement at the Central Air Traffic Control School and very poor achievement at the School of Fighter Control and the Joint School of Photographic Interpretation.** The rate of achievement is starting to improve in all three schools, and some learners are now completing their apprenticeship in nine months.

26. **The achievement rates for transportation learners is very good** and has increased over the past three years from 80 per cent to over 85 per cent. Retention is also very good at over 90 per cent. **Transportation learners produce good work.** They collect diverse evidence in the workplace, where they perform a good range of passenger handling, baggage control and cargo loading and unloading in their day-to-day duties. Many transportation learners benefit from additional training, including courses in ICT, the handling of dangerous goods, and driving lift trucks and large vehicles.

27. **In distribution, warehousing and storage operations, the achievement rate for key skills is very good.** For learners starting in 2003-04 it was 91 per cent, and for 2004-05 it is 80 per cent with a further 12 per cent of learners still on programme.

28. The achievement rate for apprenticeships in distribution, warehousing and storage operations is satisfactory, at an average of 49 per cent in the past two years.

29. **Achievement and retention rates are good in hospitality and catering.** Of the 51 learners who started programmes in 2002-03, over 80 per cent were retained and completed the framework. Of the 2003-04 intake, almost two-thirds have completed the framework and 34 are still in learning, and of the 109 in the 2004-05 intake, three have completed the framework and 98 are still in learning.

30. **In practical training sessions, hospitality and catering learners demonstrate good technical skills and good hand-eye co-ordination.** Most learners at operational stations have good technical skills and create satisfactory dishes. Many take part in competitions in the RAF and externally, and achieve very good results.

31. **In sports, learners' achievement is very good. The achievement rates for apprenticeship frameworks are outstanding,** and learners gain some of the key skills qualifications at a higher level than required by the framework. Most achieve additional qualifications. **Retention rates in sports are very good** at 84 per cent and 92 per cent for the 2001-02 and 2002-03 learners respectively. All 43 learners starting since 2003 are still in learning.

32. **Retention is good on both the RAF Police and the RAF Regiment programmes.** Over 88 per cent of the 426 learners on the two programmes since 2002-03 have been retained, including all of the 58 who started in 2004-05.

33. Achievement of technical certificates and key skills qualifications is satisfactory and improving, at 78 per cent for RAF Police and 73 per cent for the RAF Regiment. There is, however, poor achievement of full apprenticeship frameworks. **The achievement rate for RAF Regiment learners was 9 per cent in 2002-03 and only 2 per cent in 2003-04.** Five of the 10 squadrons of the RAF Regiment have failed to achieve any frameworks since learners entered the workplace. In the RAF Police, which accounts for 8 per cent of the learners, the achievement rate is better, but is still only 40 per cent. There is very slow progress for learners on the old NVQs of security, safety and loss prevention.

34. **In visual and performing arts and media, achievement and retention rates are outstanding.** In the past three years, 47 learners out of a possible 51 have completed frameworks.

35. Learners develop very good vocational skills in a wide range of photographic activities including photographic imagery to support engineering tasks, corporate communications, scene-of-crime photography, air-to-air and air-to-ground photography, portraiture, graphic design and video productions.

## Quality of education and training

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Engineering, technology & manufacturing	0	8	13	8	0	0	0	29
Information & communications technology	1	5	2	0	0	0	0	8
Retailing, customer service & transportation	0	4	5	0	0	0	0	9
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	0	5	6	4	2	0	0	17
Health, social care & public services	0	0	5	1	0	0	0	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>69</b>

36. **Engineering learners develop very good practical skills** both at the trade training schools and in the workplace. Trade instructors at the schools set challenging, realistic practical exercises and assignments, using a wide range of innovative methods which extend learners' knowledge and understanding. For example, avionics learners work on specially manufactured aircraft cockpits and flight decks that are programmed to replicate the faults and system characteristics found in current aircraft.

37. Following trade training at the schools and colleges, **learners get good, extensive experience in an appropriate workplace.** For example, learners in aircraft engineering

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trades are employed at operational RAF flying stations on first-line aircraft flight servicing and rectification, or at second-line units on scheduled aircraft maintenance programmes.

**38. In distribution, warehousing and storage operations, learners develop good skills and knowledge.** Off-the-job training is effective and well structured, and includes both background knowledge and practical sessions. Learners develop good supply skills in a simulated working environment.

**39. Learners on both the RAF Police and RAF Regiment programmes develop good occupational and transferable skills.** All learners acquire a wide range of relevant skills including a range of driving-related qualifications over and above civilian driving licences. RAF Police learners develop very good interviewing skills, using methods that are accepted as best practice in the civilian police force. They are taught control and restraint techniques and the use of firearms by local civilian police staff. RAF Regiment learners acquire a high level of skill in the use of industry-standard communications equipment.

**40. Photography learners achieve very good technical and social skills** which are demonstrated by their work in the classroom, their practical activities both in and out of the school, and their portfolios, video-recorded presentations and displays of work.

41. The RAF provides **excellent engineering resources** to ensure that learners have every opportunity to succeed. A valuable resource is the team of **highly qualified staff** who teach at the schools. Learners can learn on the equipment they will meet at their operational station. They can practise servicing life-rafts and safety, and survival equipment, working on aircraft ground support equipment, maintaining aircraft propulsion and airframe systems, and servicing armaments and ejection seat systems.

**42. There are good resources for learners in business administration.** Staff hold appropriate qualifications and have good opportunities for continuing professional development. All staff have had recent assessor training to meet the new standards. Personnel learners have access to a very good simulated environment, with equipment such as telephone switchboards meeting current industrial standards. Closed circuit television is available to record their performance. Simulated registry and general work stations are used to relate tasks closely to the workplace.

**43. ICT resources are very good.** The trade training rooms are equipped with sufficient modern desktop computers and networked printers. In one school all learners have a laptop to use during their trade training. All learners have access to an on-site learning centre, a well-equipped library and to the RAF intranet. The instructors are **highly experienced, competent staff** with good subject knowledge.

**44. Transportation resources are excellent.** Classrooms are well equipped with a good range of interactive visual aids and aircraft models. Good use is made of videos and a well-equipped cinema. Learners are issued with laptop computers and have access to a good ICT centre and library. They use a large training hangar with full-size mock-ups of current transport aircraft. A wide variety of loads, including helicopters, is used for good

practical loading instruction.

45. **Resources for training in distribution, warehousing and storage operations are particularly good.** Training accommodation is of a high standard, and very well equipped. Facilities include classrooms with electronic presentation technology, computer suites for supply software training, and a purpose-built simulated working environment. This has dedicated telephone and computer systems, and fitted-out storage, receipt and despatch facilities.

46. The **hospitality learners have good working and training environments.** At the catering training squadron, the classrooms are well furnished and have interactive whiteboards and data projectors. There are good displays, including posters and photographs of learners' work. Hospitality and catering instructors are appropriately qualified and experienced, and the kitchens are spacious and have a good range of well-maintained industry-standard equipment, but the knives learners use are of poor quality. The bar and restaurant areas have industry-standard resources including optics and free-flow beer lines. There are close circuit television cameras and video recorders in the bar, restaurant and reception simulation suite which are used well to record learners' performance in practical activities. At the operational stations, the kitchens, dining areas, reception areas and bars have an appropriate range of equipment.

47. **Sports learners have access to good resources,** including swimming pools, sports fields, all-weather sports pitches, an athletics track, sports halls, and fitness and rehabilitation centres. There are particularly good off-the-job training facilities. The operational stations where learners' on-the-job training takes place have appropriate accommodation, facilities and equipment. There is a wide range of equipment to develop practical learning skills in sports such as circuit training, gymnastics, fitness assessment and training. Most of it is fit for purpose and some is state of the art. Learners are given a physical education kit and specialist clothing for activities such as adventure training.

48. There are **good resources for learners in public services** within the schools and on each operational station. These include the staff and the physical resources. All learners receive operational-standard personal protective equipment which is constantly maintained and reviewed for its effectiveness. Learners make effective use of the well-equipped ICT suites, laptop computers and digital cameras supplied. Many classrooms have a high standard of technical equipment such as additional computers, digital projectors and interactive whiteboards. Excellent learning materials, for example those that are recognised as the best by the civilian police service, are used for developing interview techniques. All the RAF stations provide realistic work environments for learners.

49. **The Defence School of Photography has very good occupational resources.** Much of the equipment is acquired on a three-year lease, ensuring that it is kept up to current professional standards. Photographic hardware has been updated to accommodate digital imaging rather than wet-process methods. Learners use high-specification cameras and lenses, including extremely long-focus lenses designed for surveillance work. There is

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a wide selection of lighting resources both for hand-held and studio use. The school also has a comprehensive range of ICT equipment, and dark room, printing and processing facilities.

50. **Engineering teaching and training are very good.** Practical lessons are well prepared and instructors use a stimulating variety of demonstration methods. For example, good use is made of aircraft components and assemblies to illustrate key points and to relate the subject to the workplace.

51. **On-the-job training for business administration learners is very effective.** When learners join their first posting they shadow a more experienced member of staff for up to two months, gradually carrying out work of increasing complexity.

52. **In sport there is good off-the-job training.** None of the training sessions observed were unsatisfactory and in most cases the teaching and learning was challenging. Programmes are set at a level that motivates and stimulates learners. In practical lessons some **good individual coaching** enables learners to understand their progress to date and how they could improve. Practice is linked effectively to background knowledge, and learners' technical vocabulary is developed.

53. The quality of **teaching for public service learners is generally good**, although there is not enough differentiated learning in background knowledge sessions. In the best sessions, instructors made particularly good use of discussions and role-play exercises. Demonstrations are also good and staff use individual resources for each learner such as radio equipment for them to assemble. In one good background knowledge session at the RAF Police Training School, the instructor used an interactive whiteboard very effectively to help learners memorise some difficult definitions of points of law.

54. There is **good support for business administration learners.** Instructors and assessors can be accessed easily in the schools, on visits to the operational stations, or by telephone or e-mail. At the secretarial training squadron, one instructor/assessor is a qualified counsellor. Instructors at the secretarial training squadron arrange additional key skills sessions in the evenings to help learners having difficulties with application of number and communications. Learners commented favourably on the good support available.

55. **In transportation, there is good support for learners.** Those with additional needs are given individual support, including extra help with literacy, numeracy and language where needed. Dyslexia and other learning needs are identified at initial training school, and further assessed at the Defence Movements School. All learners are given the coloured rulers that help those with dyslexia, so that individuals are not identified. Duty rotas are changed to accommodate single parents with childcare needs.

56. **Support for learners on the distribution, warehousing and storage operations apprenticeship programme is good.** Additional learning needs are identified through a range of assessment methods and supported appropriately. However, the need for support is not always identified quickly enough, and is not systematically evaluated to

ensure its effectiveness. Learners feel well supported by all staff, and their physical and social welfare is consistently monitored throughout the training period

57. There is **very good support for hospitality learners**. At the catering training squadron, hospitality learners are assigned to an instructor who is a non-commissioned officer (NCO) and who provides pastoral and learning support. They can also go to the accreditation team if they wish to talk to someone outside the instructor team. Learners feel confident about approaching staff with any problems. At their operational stations, the hospitality learners work with an experienced member of staff. Most stations also have a catering trainer who will provide further support for learners across the station. Instructors are trained to recognise specific learning difficulties and to provide basic support. If necessary, learners are referred to appropriate specialists for further learning or pastoral support.

58. **Sports learners have access to extensive support arrangements**. Initial assessment is very comprehensive and identifies learners' basic skills needs and any group trends. Very good support is provided in the form of additional lessons or appropriate individual coaching. Learners have good pastoral support from a range of staff including their course director, assessor, instructor and mentor, and regard it very highly. They feel confident about discussing problems with the staff. However, a few learners are experiencing difficulties with the intensity of the off-the-job training but do not feel able to admit to this for fear of losing face.

59. There is **very good support for public services learners**. Training staff regularly work outside their normal duty hours to ensure that they are available to provide advice, guidance and extra tuition. For example, on Thursday evenings one member of staff is available at the RAF Police Training School to enable learners to 'drop in' and prepare for future assessments. When a learner starts to underperform, very good support is provided to enable them to succeed. They are referred to the training and development unit where they receive effective diagnostic testing and may be referred to an educational psychologist. In the RAF Regiment Training School, learners who are diagnosed as having dyslexia, dyscalculia or dyspraxia receive additional hours of support from a specialist instructor.

60. **Learners in photography are supported well**. Their specific needs are identified and a range of agencies can be called upon to support them. A learner with dyslexia has successfully been helped with handouts in specific fonts on coloured paper, and been given additional time to complete work.

61. **The assessment of engineering learners' background knowledge and the quality of the feedback they are given is inconsistent**. Some learners receive detailed feedback while others receive none. Assessors' decisions vary, so that one assessor may accept an answer while another requires more information. The frequency with which portfolios are assessed varies. Some are assessed continuously throughout the programme while others are not assessed until completion. In some portfolios, witness status lists and sample signatures are incomplete.

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62. For learners **in business administration there is insufficient workplace assessment.** NVQ training for personnel administration learners takes place off the job using simulated activities. **There is a significant shortage of work-based assessors in catering accounts, and none at all in medical administration.**

63. The assessment practice across the three ICT schools is satisfactory. There is thorough matching of the line manager and assessor roles. Good use is made of real work activities and evidence is presented in well-structured portfolios. However, portfolios contain written questions and answers as performance evidence. Learners complete their online key skills tests in their own time. Countersigning happens remotely and sometimes the only feedback given is verbal and it is not formally recorded. There are **too few ICT assessors at some operational stations. Some portfolios contain no evidence although the learners have been on the programme for 18 months.** Some learners have been withdrawn because the school is unable to support them. There has been too much turnover of staff in key accreditation posts at the Joint School of Photographic Interpretation and the School of Fighter Control.

64. **NVQ assessments in transportation are carried out to a high standard** in the workplace. Thirty-two assessors assess learners under normal operational conditions at 10 locations in the United Kingdom and abroad. The conditions involve considerable operational pressures such as ensuring weight and distribution loads are calculated quickly to enable aircraft to take off on time, or carrying out passenger clearance procedures sometimes with very senior personnel and VIPs. Transportation assessors use a wide range of assessment methods confirmed by extensive questioning.

65. **Assessment and verification practice is poor in distribution, warehousing and storage operations.** Learners' evidence for NVQ mandatory units contains little detail of their personal performance, and the related witness statements do not provide evidence of learners' competence over time. Assessors' observation reports are very brief, and do not indicate in sufficient detail how learners met the qualification standards. Feedback on learners' performance during assessment is not recorded on assessment reports, and learners are not assessed in their workplace by appropriate assessors.

66. There is **some weak assessment practice in hospitality and catering.** Chefs are assessed using phase tests in practical teaching rooms, and trade ability tests at their operational station. Phase tests do not show work competence over a period of time and are not explicitly linked to the NVQ standards. Although they do not take place in a realistic work environment, the assessment is rigorous. An instructor who has not taught the learner marks the tests using a detailed marking scheme. Learners receive detailed verbal and written feedback. Food and drink service learners are assessed in a realistic working environment at the catering training squadron.

67. In sport, assessment and monitoring of progress is satisfactory. There is a clear assessment structure and process, and work has been done on linking the NVQ with the wider training for physical training instructors. There is a good ratio of assessors to learners. However, some assessors observing activities were distracted and talking to other staff. Assessors' feedback does not always link clearly to the framework standards

and some learners are not made aware of the level of competence they have achieved. Assessors' feedback on some documents contains basic spelling and grammar mistakes.

68. Assessment practice in public services is satisfactory overall. There is very good initial assessment, especially at the RAF Regiment school. Potential RAF Regiment learners are required to take a three-day practical assessment on the base and in the field. This is effectively used to test learners' attitude and aptitude. Initial screening is used to assess learners' key skills levels and possible learning difficulties, but this information is not used effectively until learners start to underperform during their initial training phase. Work-based assessment practice is satisfactory. With the approval of the awarding body, RAF Police learners are assessed during their final intensive police trade tests week in a realistic working environment.

69. **Some engineering learners' progress reviews are weak.** Progress reviews are not always carried out in accordance with contractual requirements. Workplace supervisors are not sufficiently involved in progress reviews and there is some poor action-planning and target-setting. There is insufficient reinforcement of equal opportunities, diversity, and health and safety during the review discussions.

70. **In business administration, progress reviews are thorough, but supervisors and assessors are not routinely involved.** The targets set are not always realistic, and the absence of supervisors and assessors does little to encourage achievement. There is a website available which contains useful information and communication links for learners.

71. **Reviews of distribution, warehousing and storage operations learners' progress are ineffective,** and focus only on overall completion of key skills qualifications, the workplace log-book and the qualification framework. Learners are not given specific, measurable and time-bound targets. Learning plans are highly standardised, and few set targets for individual learners. The plans carry little information on the results of initial assessment or on any support needs. Progress reviews fail to remind learners of important equal opportunities and health and safety issues or check whether their support needs are being met. Some reviews are carried out over the telephone, and some even take place in the learner's absence. Line managers are not routinely involved in reviewing learners' progress.

72. Most progress reviews for hospitality and catering learners are satisfactory. They are carried out in the workplace at least every 12 weeks by accreditation staff, but do not always involve the workplace supervisor or manager. Learners review their progress and agree action points for achievement by the next review date. Learners and their line manager receive a copy of the review document and a reminder letter at least three weeks before the planned review date. The targets set often focus on completion of aspects of the framework, rather than on skill development, and they are not always measurable or accompanied by deadlines. Equality of opportunity, and health and safety are not discussed. Some review documents are poorly completed.

73. Assessment and monitoring of learners' progress in photography are satisfactory. However the results of initial assessments carried out by the Armed Forces Careers

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Office are not always shared with the school. Assessments are planned into the programme and marked and graded by a panel. Feedback is given to the learner but is not always recorded in sufficient detail. **Individual learning plans are not used to challenge photography learners to maximise their potential.**

74. **There is insufficient use of initial assessment in business administration.** Many learners have little recollection of any initial assessment and the results are not recorded on their individual learning plans. A change in the type of initial assessment used has meant that literacy and numeracy are no longer identified as areas of development. Assessors are not always aware of learners' support needs and line managers are not informed of the results of initial assessment.

75. All ICT learners take an initial assessment during their eight-week trade training irrespective of their previous achievements in English and mathematics. Following a recent change to the programme, this is no longer followed up with any further diagnostic tests. Learners who need to develop their key skills use occupationally relevant books developed by the NVQ centre.

76. **The written feedback in portfolios is identical for all learners in hospitality and does not reflect individuals' performance.** There is little supplementary evidence in portfolios although it is mentioned in monitoring documents. Learners complete the background knowledge sections of their NVQ during their initial trade training at the Catering Training Squadron, and many think they have finished the NVQ when they leave the squadron.

77. Individual learning plans for public services learners are satisfactory, although the links between the training schools' action and learning plans and the apprenticeship plans are not always clear. All learners follow the same optional units and the same key skills assignments.

### Leadership and management

78. **Management of the recruit training squadron is particularly effective.** All RAF recruits, except those who enter the RAF Regiment, attend RAF Halton for an intensive nine-week introduction to service life. The programme is highly structured and provides an effective introduction to the RAF's ethos and values, which are respect for self and others, integrity, service and excellence.

79. The RAF's policy on bullying and harassment is introduced to learners very early in the programme and effectively reinforced. Learners receive pastoral support from their instructors and from the padre. Learners value the training they receive and comment favourably on the support they receive from their instructors. Completion rates are good and have improved in the last year following the introduction of initiatives to support recruits who were experiencing difficulties on the programme.

80. There is **good management of physical and human resources.** Learners work with up-to-date technology and industry-standard equipment, particularly in photography and

engineering. There are well-appointed training rooms for retailing and customer service learners, and a closed circuit television system in catering to monitor and to feed back on learners' work. Learners receive good-quality learning materials in class and have good access to computers connected to the internet and to the service's intranet. Staff are very well qualified and experienced. Many have recent RAF experience in the trade that they instruct in.

81. **There is good training and development for staff.** All staff are issued with a personal development record on which to record the training they have already received or would like in the future. Staff are appraised annually with a follow-up review after six months. They prepare for their appraisals by completing a self-assessment form which is then used as a basis for the appraisal discussion. Appraisals focus on staff training and development needs. The RAF provides **good financial support for staff taking assessor and internal verifier qualifications** and other courses related to their work.

82. The RAF places a **strong emphasis on health and safety and environmental protection** throughout all of its activities, particularly in its apprenticeship programmes. Detailed policies and guidelines are incorporated into joint service publications, and are further supplemented by individual unit, squadron and section orders. In addition to the induction given during training and on arrival at their individual units, learners' health and safety practices are closely observed while they carry out their practical trade training in the schools and the workplace. Procedures for the use of personal protective equipment are strictly enforced.

83. **The management of assessment and internal verification is satisfactory in most areas but weak in engineering, hospitality, and distribution and warehousing.** In these areas, there are insufficient assessors to meet the needs of all learners and internal verification practices are weak.

84. There is an overall RAF policy on equality and diversity which has recently been updated. The policy is clear, well written and makes appropriate reference to recent legislation. As each station commander has the authority to write their own equality and diversity policy, there are many versions in use.

85. There are some **particularly good equality and diversity noticeboards at RAF Halton**, displaying details of relevant statutes alongside recent newspaper articles about bullying, harassment and discrimination. Copies of the RAF equality booklets are easily available to learners. There is an informative equality and diversity newsletter for staff which is published twice a year.

86. **Welfare support is good.** All learners are positive about the help they receive from their instructors and line managers. There is a dedicated harassment helpline. Confidential personal advice is available through the chaplaincy service and also the Sailors, Soldiers and Air Force Association (SSAFA).

87. There is a satisfactory complaints procedure, but many learners are not fully aware of when it should be used. Formal complaints of bullying and harassment are recorded

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well. Staff handling formal complaints are appropriately trained to carry out investigations. However, most complaints are dealt with informally at local level. These complaints are not recorded and are not always dealt with by appropriately trained staff.

**88. Management of literacy, numeracy and language support is weak in all areas of learning except sport and fitness and public services.** There are no formal arrangements for the initial assessment of learners in other areas of learning. All learners, except those following RAF Regiment training, attend the recruit training squadron at RAF Halton for phase 1 training. Learners take a key skills initial assessment test in the second week of the course at RAF Halton. The results of this assessment are not routinely made available to the ground training schools. Most learners work towards key skills at the level prescribed by the awarding body, irrespective of their previous qualifications.

**89. Learners' additional needs are not always identified quickly enough.** For example, there is no formal initial assessment of additional learning or social needs. Staff support learners who have additional needs, but their help is not systematic and is not recorded. The RAF is committed to introducing a new assessment procedure that will identify learners' strengths and weaknesses without labelling them. Currently, there is no such assessment. However, if a learner states that they have a specific learning need, or an instructor identifies such a need, then the RAF will arrange a suitable test and if necessary, an appointment with an educational psychologist.

**90. There is insufficient use of management data to improve performance.** The RAF cannot easily produce reliable data on the number of learners, or on retention and achievement rates. Central monitoring of learners who have left the ground training school is weak. The RAF cannot produce accurate and meaningful data. For example, it is not able to identify retention and achievement rates according to where learners are based, and does not know how many learners have completed their programme and are awaiting certification. It cannot produce information to show the number of learners who have completed key skills portfolios or passed the technical certificate. Management information is not produced in a routine and timely way. Senior managers do not receive regular reports on the performance of individual ground training schools.

**91. Management of the apprenticeship programme is ineffective.** Provision for the 4,086 learners in engineering and the 340 learners in public services, who together account for 80 per cent of those funded by the LSC, was judged by inspectors to be unsatisfactory. **There are too many staff who do not understand the requirements of the apprenticeship framework.** Senior managers do not understand the apprenticeship framework as well as they should. Managers often react to issues too late and there is not enough strategic planning to meet the needs of learners.

**92. There is insufficient reinforcement of equal opportunities and diversity.** Learners are given a copy of the 'zero tolerance' booklet, but little more is done to enable learners to understand their roles and responsibilities both as learners and as work colleagues. Equality of opportunity is not adequately covered during learners' progress reviews.

**93. The management and co-ordination of quality assurance is ineffective.** Staff in the

accreditation group at RAF Innsworth are responsible for implementing the operations manual, but this is not effective. A member of the group carries out regular quality audits of each of the ground training schools and produces a report which is seen by managers. However, this does not ensure or promote quality assurance or continuous improvement.

94. **The scheme for the observation of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory.** It requires instructors to be observed once a year, but this does not always happen. Instructors are not clear about who will carry out the observation. Records of observations concentrate too much on teaching and instructional techniques rather than on learning and attainment. Observers do not comment on the effectiveness of techniques to meet individual learning needs, even though learners have a wide range of individual needs. Lessons are not graded. Strategies for raising the quality of teaching and learning are not clearly identified or followed up.

95. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. Staff in each area of learning produced course-level self-assessment reports, which were collated and moderated by staff at the accreditation group at RAF Innsworth. This resulted in a number of area of learning self-assessment reports being changed and grades amended. Engineering staff do not feel that the final self-assessment report is an accurate reflection of their provision. Inspectors' judgements and grades reflected many of those in the self-assessment report. Inspectors also found further strengths and weaknesses, and considered many of the strengths in the self-assessment to be no more than normal practice while some of the weaknesses were overstated.

## Leadership and management

### Strengths

- particularly effective management of initial training
- good management of resources
- good training and development of staff
- strong emphasis on good standards of workplace health and safety and environmental protection
- good promotional materials for equality of opportunity

### Weaknesses

- ineffective management of the apprenticeship programme
- weak management of literacy, numeracy and language support
- insufficient use of management data to improve performance
- insufficient reinforcement of equality of opportunity for learners and staff
- ineffective quality assurance system

## **Engineering, technology & manufacturing**

### ***Other contributory areas***

#### *Strengths*

- good retention rates
- good achievement of key skills in 2004-05
- good development of skills
- very good teaching and training
- excellent resources
- good monitoring of learners' progress
- good strategies to improve achievement

#### *Weaknesses*

- very poor rates of framework achievement
- very slow progress
- some poor NVQ assessment and internal verification practices
- weak progress reviews
- weak management of on-the-job training

## **Business administration, management & professional**

### ***Business administration***

#### *Strengths*

- good and improving retention
- good achievement of NVQs
- effective on-the-job training
- good resources
- good support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- slow progress towards framework achievement
- insufficient use of initial assessment
- insufficient workplace assessment
- no co-ordinated strategy for the improvement of training programme

## **Information & communications technology**

### ***Using IT***

#### *Strengths*

- particularly good retention
- very good framework achievement at the Central Air Traffic Control School
- very good teaching and learning
- good accommodation and physical resources
- programme well matched to learners' career aspirations

#### *Weaknesses*

- very poor achievement rates at the Joint School of Photographic Interpretation and the School of Fighter Control
- very slow progress by some learners
- insufficient assessors in some operational stations
- insufficiently individualised learning plans and progress reviews

## **Retailing, customer service & transportation**

### ***Transportation***

#### *Strengths*

- very good achievement and retention
- high standard of learners' work
- good off-the-job training
- excellent training resources
- good assessment practice
- well-led and managed provision

#### *Weaknesses*

- no significant weaknesses identified

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### ***Warehousing and distribution***

#### *Strengths*

- very good achievement of key skills qualifications
- good development of skills and knowledge
- particularly good resources
- good support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor assessment and verification practice
- ineffective progress reviews
- inadequate communication of programme requirements

### **Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel**

#### ***Hospitality and catering***

#### *Strengths*

- very good achievement
- very good retention rates
- very good teaching in practical cookery sessions
- good, well-equipped working and training environments
- very good support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- some weak NVQ assessment practice
- poor understanding of the hospitality NVQ and framework for many workplace supervisors

#### ***Leisure, sport and recreation***

#### *Strengths*

- very good achievement
- very high retention rates
- good off-the-job training
- good resources to develop practical skills
- extensive arrangements to support learners
- very effective leadership and management

#### *Weaknesses*

- incomplete gathering of information

## **Health, social care & public services**

### ***Public services***

#### *Strengths*

- good retention
- good development of occupational skills
- good resources
- very good support for learners
- good promotion and understanding of equality of opportunity

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor framework achievement for RAF Regiment learners
- very slow progress for some learners
- weak management of apprenticeship programme

## **Visual & performing arts & media**

### ***Other contributory areas***

#### *Strengths*

- outstanding rate of achievement of apprenticeship frameworks
- particularly good retention
- good acquisition of technical and social skills
- very good occupational resources
- good support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient internal verification and course administration resources

## **WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT THE ROYAL AIR FORCE:**

- the good personal support from instructors and assessors
- the good training
- the opportunity to get nationally recognised civilian qualifications
- 'it's good to earn while I learn'
- 'the help I have had with my dyslexia'
- the good facilities
- the outdoor adventure training week
- 'being part of a team and enjoying their company'
- 'how well we are treated'
- the career opportunities
- the good IT facilities
- 'I feel I am improving myself'

## **WHAT LEARNERS THINK THE ROYAL AIR FORCE COULD IMPROVE:**

- the amount of time available on the squadron and during operations by getting rid of the distance learning
- the teaching methods - there are too many computerised presentations and they are boring
- the amount of practical experience - reintroduce two-weeks' practical experience on an operational station during phase 2 training
- the time available to work on portfolios after joining operational stations
- the recognition of previous qualifications
- the quality of the food in the mess at RAF Cosford
- the NVQ system - make it more flexible, there's no time on first-line work
- the readability of the paperwork and books for the NVQs
- the amount of information about what we will do when we leave RAF Cosford
- 'get rid of key skills, why do we have to do them?'
- 'stop having parades at weekends'
- 'stop treating women better than men'

## **KEY CHALLENGES FOR THE ROYAL AIR FORCE:**

- improve the rate of achievement of frameworks, particularly in engineering and security
- establish robust quality assurance
- improve understanding of NVQs by learners and staff
- make better use of data
- improve the strategic management of the apprenticeship programme
- develop and implement an effective strategy for language, literacy and numeracy support

## DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

### LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 4

#### Strengths

- particularly effective management of initial training
- good management of resources
- good training and development of staff
- strong emphasis on good standards of workplace health and safety and environmental protection
- good promotional materials for equality of opportunity

#### Weaknesses

- ineffective management of the apprenticeship programme
- weak management of literacy, numeracy and language support
- insufficient use of management data to improve performance
- insufficient reinforcement of equality of opportunity for learners and staff
- ineffective quality assurance system

96. The recruit training squadron is managed particularly effectively. All RAF recruits, except those entering the RAF Regiment, attend nine weeks of intensive initial training at RAF Halton. The programme is highly structured and provides an effective introduction to the RAF's ethos and values, which are respect for oneself and others, integrity, service and excellence. These values are regularly reinforced and well understood. Learners receive basic military training, and take part in teamwork and practical exercises. Their health and fitness is promoted through structured physical training routines, 24-hour access to medical services and dietary advice and guidance. The RAF's policy on bullying and harassment is introduced to learners very early in the programme and effectively reinforced. Learners receive pastoral support from their instructors and from the padre. They value the training they receive and comment favourably on the support their instructors give them. Completion rates are good and have improved in the past year following the introduction of initiatives to support recruits who were experiencing difficulties on the programme.

97. Learners joining the RAF Regiment training programme have their initial training at RAF Honington. They take part in a thorough three-day practical assessment which is effectively used to test their attitude and aptitude. The initial screening process is used to identify basic skills needs and possible learning difficulties.

98. There is good management of physical and human resources. Learners work with up-to-date technology and industry-standard equipment, particularly in photography and engineering. There are well-appointed training rooms for retailing and customer service

learners, and a closed circuit television system used in catering, to enable staff to monitor and feed back on learners' work. Learners are given good-quality learning materials in class, and have good access to computers connected to the internet and to the service's intranet. Learners in transportation are issued with a laptop computer for the duration of their off-the-job training. In public services and in business administration, there is particularly good use of technology to simulate a real working environment. Staff are very well qualified and experienced. Many have recent RAF experience in the trade that they instruct in. However, there are not enough qualified assessors in engineering, in ICT at the School of Fighter Control and the Joint School of Photographic Interpretation, and in catering accounts and medical administration.

99. Training and development for staff is good. All staff are issued with a personal development record which details the training they have received or would like to do. Staff are appraised annually and have a follow-up review after six months. Staff prepare for their appraisals by completing a self-assessment form which is then used as a basis for the appraisal discussion. Appraisals focus on staff training and development needs. The RAF provides good financial support for staff taking assessor and internal verifier qualifications and for other courses related to their work. The RAF supports lifelong learning by providing financial assistance to all RAF personnel in the form of a standard learning credit of £175 a year. It has recently introduced an enhanced learning credit, currently £3,000 over three years, and up to £6,000 over three years after an eight-year qualifying period, which can be used to access further or higher education. Most RAF stations have a learning centre, manned by a personal learning adviser with additional support from station training development officers. These staff advise and support personnel with personal and professional development queries.

100. The RAF places a strong emphasis on health and safety, and environmental protection in all its activities, but particularly in its apprenticeship programmes. Detailed policies and guidelines are incorporated into joint service publications and are further supplemented by individual unit, squadron and section orders. At all schools and units, suitably qualified health and safety, and environmental protection advisers ensure that good standards are adhered to in the working environment. New staff arriving at schools and operational stations are required to undergo a mandatory health and safety and environmental protection induction within three months of arrival. As part of their annual completion of common core skills, they also have a further briefing that is specific to their working environment. Although individual units may differ slightly in how they provide this training, the basic structure is the same. Learners' health and safety practices are closely observed while they carry out their practical trade training in the schools and the workplace. In both the schools and the workplace, procedures for the use of personal protective equipment are strictly enforced.

101. Some ground training schools carry out their own diagnostic assessments. However, these assessments do not constitute basic initial assessment and the results are not always an accurate reflection of their needs. There are no formal timetabled support sessions for learners with additional needs. Instructors help learners with their basic skills, but this support is informal and is not recorded. The RAF has policies on special learning difficulties, which are internally funded and resourced, but it is not able to provide

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information on how many of its learners have additional support needs. Training development officers and learning centre staff provide support to all learners with special learning needs. Assessors receive good training in how to identify and support learners with specific learning difficulties. Support for learners with dyslexia is good.

102. Management of the apprenticeship programme is ineffective. Learners in engineering and public services together make up 80 per cent of the LSC-funded provision, but both areas were judged unsatisfactory by inspectors. There are too many staff who do not understand the requirements of the apprenticeship framework. Senior managers do not understand the apprenticeship framework as well as they should. Managers often react to issues too late and there is not enough strategic planning to meet the needs of learners. For example, the framework achievement rate for engineering is 4 per cent but managers have only recently recognised this problem and taken action to improve it. In some programme areas, staff do not co-operate even though they share similar problems.

103. The management of literacy, numeracy and language support is weak in all areas of learning except sport and fitness and public services. There are no formal initial assessment arrangements in the other areas of learning. All learners, except those following RAF Regiment training, attend the recruit training squadron at RAF Halton, where they take a key skills initial assessment test in the second week of the course. The results of this assessment are not routinely passed to the ground training schools. Most learners work towards key skills at the minimum level prescribed by the awarding body, irrespective of their previous qualifications. There are satisfactory arrangements for exempting learners from individual key skills tests if they already hold equivalent qualifications.

104. There is insufficient use of management data to improve performance. The RAF keeps data on learners electronically, but staff do not make sufficient use of this resource. Central monitoring of learners who have left the ground training school is weak. The RAF cannot produce accurate and meaningful data. For example, it cannot identify retention and achievement rates according to where learners are based, and it does not know how many learners have completed their qualifications and are awaiting certification. It cannot produce information on the number of learners who have completed key skills portfolios or those who have passed the technical certificate. Management information is not produced in a routine and timely way. Senior managers do not receive regular reports on the performance of individual ground training schools, and cannot set realistic and manageable targets for the improvement of the programme.

### **Equality of opportunity**

### **Contributory grade 3**

105. There is an overall RAF policy on equality and diversity which has recently been updated. The policy is clear, well written and makes appropriate reference to recent legislation. As each station commander has the authority to write their own equality and diversity policy, there are many versions in use.

106. There are some particularly good equality and diversity noticeboards at RAF Halton

displaying details of relevant statutes, and recent newspaper articles about bullying, harassment and discrimination. Copies of the RAF equality booklets are easily available to learners. There is an informative equality and diversity newsletter for staff which is published twice a year. However, there are some inappropriate posters in a few locations.

107. The RAF is carrying out nationwide recruiting campaigns including television advertisements. Written publicity materials are attractively presented and easy to understand. All publicity is aimed at a wide range of prospective recruits and covers a large number of trades. There are dedicated teams to encourage minority ethnic recruitment. During the past 18 months, youth activity liaison officers have been appointed at every station to develop good links with the local community. One station has built up good relationships with schools in the Muslim and Sikh communities. Another initiative has seen some of the RAF's elite sportsmen demonstrating to 300 young sports hopefuls, while at RAF Halton, a pilot scheme is being run with the Aylesbury Youth Offending Team to boost the self-esteem, trust and tolerance of young people.

108. In 1998, the RAF entered a five-year partnership agreement with the Commission for Racial Equality and committed itself to reporting on its progress towards improving the recruitment and retention rates of servicemen and women from minority ethnic groups. However, despite the targeted recruitment campaigns, the RAF does not meet its targets for the recruitment of women or members of minority ethnic groups. There are no separate figures to demonstrate equality of opportunity on the apprenticeship. The current figures for the whole of the RAF show that 2.6 per cent of its members are from minority ethnic groups and 11 per cent are women.

109. As part of the nine-week induction programme, time is spent on developing the service ethos, promoting team work, and training in military skills and personal development. All learners receive a copy of a clearly written booklet, 'Zero Tolerance to Harassment and Bullying', which includes the RAF equality and diversity policy and the complaints procedure. The main points are covered by instructors in lectures. In addition, five learning sessions on the ethos, core values and standards of the RAF are led by the chaplain.

110. The content of induction for learners beginning the work-based stage of their programmes varies widely. All receive information about the operational station they will be working at, and a minority have a more detailed programme, which includes a brief introduction to equality and diversity. At one station the chaplain introduces himself by repeating some aspects of the core values programme.

111. Welfare support is good. All learners are positive about the help they receive from their instructors and line managers. There is a dedicated harassment helpline, and confidential personal advice is available both through the chaplaincy service and the SSAFA. Learners receive a contact card which includes 24-hour contact numbers for staff.

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112. There is insufficient reinforcement of equal opportunities and diversity. Learners are given the 'Zero Tolerance' booklet, but little is done to develop their understanding of their roles and responsibilities as learners and as work colleagues. Equal opportunities is not adequately covered during learners' progress reviews.

113. There is insufficient reinforcement of equality and diversity for many staff. There is an established system to alert staff to changes in legislation, either through the equality and diversity advisers or over the intranet, but there is no systematic equal opportunities training. Some staff have completed an equality and diversity awareness training package by distance learning and a CD-ROM is also available. They provide basic coverage of some of the main issues and are used to test knowledge, but not understanding. Recently, some managers were offered the opportunity to take part in an equal opportunities theatre workshop, using actors to enact various equal opportunities situations. These were used as starting points for discussion. At least one equality and diversity officer is working with staff to use the good practice from this training to create an in-house training programme. Staff are committed to providing fair and equitable treatment to learners, but there is no clear definition of their roles and responsibilities for the promotion of equality and diversity.

114. There is a satisfactory complaints procedure, but many learners are not fully aware of when it should be used. Formal complaints of bullying and harassment are well recorded. The staff who handle formal complaints are appropriately trained to carry out investigations. However, most complaints are dealt with informally at local level. These complaints are not recorded and are not always dealt with by appropriately trained staff.

115. Learners' additional needs are not always identified quickly enough. For example, there is no formal initial assessment of additional learning or social needs. Staff offer informal support to learners who have additional needs, but this help is not recorded. The RAF is committed to introducing a new assessment procedure that will identify learners' strengths and weaknesses without labelling them. However, if a learner states that they have a specific learning need, or an instructor identifies such a need, then the RAF will arrange a suitable test and, if necessary, an appointment with an educational psychologist.

### **Quality assurance**

### **Contributory grade 4**

116. The RAF's operations manual clearly identifies procedures for the quality assurance of the key training processes. However, this manual is not applied consistently across the provision. For example, the procedure for initial assessment is only applied in a few areas of learning. Progress reviews are not always carried out in the same way. Some ground training schools have adapted standard documents from the operations manual for their own use, and there is too much inconsistency in the way that paperwork is completed. The self-assessment report identified weaknesses in quality assurance.

117. The management of assessment and internal verification is satisfactory in most areas but weak in engineering, hospitality and distribution and warehousing. In these areas, there are too few assessors to meet the needs of all learners, and internal

verification practices are weak.

118. The management of the engineering key skills subcontractor is satisfactory. There is a detailed service level agreement and satisfactory arrangements for the quality assurance of the subcontractor's provision.

119. The management and co-ordination of quality assurance is ineffective. Staff in the accreditation group at RAF Innsworth are responsible for implementing the operations manual, but this is not currently being done effectively. A member of the group carries out regular quality audits of each of the ground training schools, and produces a report which is seen by managers. However, this is not enough to ensure or promote quality assurance or continuous improvement.

120. The scheme for the observation of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. It requires instructors to be observed once a year, but this does not always happen. Instructors are not clear about who will carry out the observation. Records of observations concentrate too much on teaching and instructional techniques rather than on learning or on attainment. Observers do not comment on the effectiveness of techniques in meeting individual learning needs, even though learners have a wide range of individual needs. Lessons are not graded. Strategies for raising the quality of teaching and learning are not clearly identified or followed up.

121. The self-assessment procedure is satisfactory. Staff in each area of learning produced course-level self-assessment reports, which were then collated and moderated by staff in the accreditation group at RAF Innsworth. A number of area of learning self-assessment reports and grades were changed at this stage. Engineering staff interviewed did not regard the final self-assessment report as an accurate reflection of their provision. Inspectors made many of the same judgments as those in the self-assessment report, but found additional strengths and weaknesses. Many of the strengths in the self-assessment report were no more than normal practice while some of the weaknesses were overstated.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Engineering, technology & manufacturing		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Other contributory areas</b> - Apprenticeships for young people	4086	4

#### **Other contributory areas**

##### *Strengths*

- good retention rates
- good achievement of key skills in 2004-05
- good development of skills
- very good teaching and training
- excellent resources
- good monitoring of learners' progress
- good strategies to improve achievement

##### *Weaknesses*

- very poor rates of framework achievement
- very slow progress
- some poor NVQ assessment and internal verification practices
- weak progress reviews
- weak management of on-the-job training

#### **Achievement and standards**

122. Retention rates on engineering programmes are good. In 2000-01 and 2001-02, the retention rate was 94 per cent. Of all the learners who started programmes since 2000, 92 per cent have either been retained or are still on programme.

123. There is good achievement of key skills by learners at the Defence College of Aeronautical Training and the No 1 Radio School, Defence College of Communications and Information Systems. The RAF policy for key skills was changed in mid-2004 and engineering learners now stay at their training college until they have satisfactorily completed their key skills programme.

124. There are 2,900 engineering learners who left the training schools before the introduction of the new policy without successfully completing their key skills qualifications, and who are now serving at other RAF bases in the UK and overseas.

These learners are now on an intensive key skills recovery programme, provided by a subcontractor. The recovery programme started in October 2004 and is proving very successful. The RAF has set demanding performance targets and the learners' success rates to date suggest that these will be exceeded. In addition, a new promotion policy for RAF engineers means that learners cannot be promoted to corporal without a key skills certificate. Recent key skills achievement rates indicate that both policy changes are contributing effectively to eliminating the backlog.

125. The achievement rate for NVQs is satisfactory. Currently, 59 per cent of learners in the workplace have completed their NVQ. Recent improvements to the management and assessment practices for the NVQ element of the framework have included the appointment of NVQ assessors and internal verifiers at each of the RAF operating bases around the country. This action has had a significant effect on learners' progress.

126. Framework completion rates are very poor. For learners starting in 2000-01 and 2001-02 the rates are 4 per cent and 3 per cent respectively. The RAF has identified the legacy of poor key skills achievements as the root cause for this.

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Advanced apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	21		797		1021		1352		1278							
Retained*	0		1	0	4	0	1273	94	1204	94							
Successfully completed	0		1	0	4	0	35	3	53	4							
Still in learning	21		746	94	930	91	1238	92	1151	90							

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

## Quality of education and training

127. Learners develop very good practical skills while at the trade training schools and in the workplace. Trade instructors at the schools set challenging, realistic, practical exercises and assignments, using a wide range of innovative methods which extend learners' knowledge and understanding. For example, avionics learners work on specially manufactured aircraft cockpits and flight decks that are programmed to replicate the faults and system characteristics in current aircraft. These learners quickly develop good systematic approaches and techniques to the diagnosis and rectification of faults on the aircraft simulators, which they are able to use when working on in-service aircraft after they leave the training school.

128. Following trade training at the colleges, learners get good, extensive experience in

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the workplace appropriate to their RAF trade group. For example, learners in aircraft engineering trades are employed at one of a number of operational RAF flying stations on servicing and repairing first-line aircraft, or at second-line units on scheduled aircraft maintenance programmes. Learners are quickly assimilated into the maintenance crews when they join their first station, and are given early responsibility for carrying out servicing and maintenance on in-service aircraft. They are expected to work shifts if needed and be ready for worldwide deployment at short notice on exercises or active operations. Learners respond positively to this early responsibility and the chance to use their new skills and knowledge.

129. Teaching and training are very good. Twenty-nine lessons were observed at the colleges, both in the training workshops and the background knowledge classrooms, of which 21 were graded good or better. None of the observed lessons was judged unsatisfactory. Practical lessons are well prepared and instructors use a stimulating variety of demonstration methods. For example, good use is made of aircraft components and assemblies to illustrate key points and relate the subject to the workplace.

130. Learners receive effective guidance from knowledgeable instructors and workplace supervisors, most of whom have wide experience, good teaching qualifications, and are enthusiastic about their subjects. Learners respond well to their instructors' enthusiasm, are motivated and make good progress. Instructors make good use of assessment questioning. Technical language is explained effectively. The training areas are clean, spacious, well laid out and provide many learning opportunities. Lessons are well planned, with suitable pauses in practical instruction for instructors to review learners' progress and give them the opportunity to ask questions. There are many innovative training exercises to reinforce practical skills. Handouts are good and well presented and cover health and safety topics well. Training workbooks are very detailed with some excellent graphical representations of equipment.

131. The RAF provides excellent resources to ensure that learners have every opportunity to succeed. One valuable resource is the team of highly qualified staff who teach at the colleges. The teaching team comprises a mixture of civilian staff who provide continuity, and serving RAF personnel who provide current operational experience of RAF aircraft and telecommunications. Many of the staff have excellent qualifications including higher national certificates, degrees and teaching qualifications. The RAF provides them with financial support to work towards other qualifications. At operational stations the personnel dealing with the learners are all skilled tradespersons with relevant skills in the equipment being used. The physical resources for training are exceptional. At the training schools learners can learn on the equipment they will meet at their operational stations. They may be servicing life-rafts, and safety and survival equipment, working on aircraft ground support equipment, maintaining aircraft propulsion and airframe systems, and servicing armaments and ejection seat systems. Learners are trained to marshal live aircraft on the airfield. Classrooms and syndicate rooms are excellent and are fully equipped to provide a good learning environment, with interactive whiteboards and state-of-the art presentation projectors. ICT suites are available for use both during the working day and in the evenings.

132. At the operational stations and in the workplace learners benefit from being trained on the full range of in-service equipment. Aircraft engineering learners receive additional specialist training at the aircraft training schools and on the squadron aircraft at the main operating stations. Propulsion learners at the main transport aircraft bases of RAF Brize Norton and RAF Lyneham are taught multi-engine aircraft starting systems on VC10 and Hercules flight simulators. Learners are motivated by the opportunity to learn on the flight simulators. They are enthusiastic about servicing and working on current strike aircraft like the Tornado, and modern military transport aircraft such as the C17 Globemaster and the Mark J Hercules.

133. All units have good library facilities with access to most literature. Many learners also have access to learndirect courses through interactive learning centres.

134. Learners' literacy, numeracy and language support needs are assessed during the phase 1 recruit training. If learners are identified as requiring additional support during their engineering trade training then specialist resources are available to support them.

135. The RAF has recently started to introduce a much improved system for monitoring learners' progress. Assessors now record learners' progress every week in considerable detail on a computer database. Learners who are behind with framework components have regular meetings with their assessors and are set suitable tasks and target dates that are monitored closely. They are also given individual support and help, in some cases every week. The monitoring entails detailed examination of work in progress at element level. In addition the progress to date is recorded manually in the learners' files and assessors use the manual files to work with the learners. The computer records are used to produce graphs to illustrate progress, and these are often displayed on the learning centre walls where learners can see them. Learners are given effective written feedback at element, range and unit level.

136. Learners have made very slow progress towards completing their framework. A substantial proportion of learners have been in learning for more than the contract period, and many will have been in learning for more than five years before they complete their frameworks. The RAF has recognised this problem and changed the way the framework is taught, and this is helping to improve outcomes for learners who are in the workplace. The changes include using a subcontractor for key skills, and improving the management of NVQ assessment. It is now mandatory for learners to complete key skills qualifications and in some trades, the technical certificate, before they leave their training college for workplace training. These changes are beginning to improve framework completion, but there is still a large backlog of learners who have exceeded their funded learning period.

137. Some of the assessment and feedback learners are given on background knowledge questions is poor. Some receive detailed feedback while others receive none. Assessors decisions vary so that, for example, one assessor may accept a learner's answer while another requires more information. The frequency with which portfolios are assessed varies. Some are assessed continuously throughout the programme, while

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others are left until completion. There are incomplete witness status lists and sample signatures in some portfolios.

138. Some internal verification practise is poor. At some RAF stations, it is well planned and recorded and assessors receive comprehensive and detailed feedback. However, internal verification does not take place at all bases. Assessors do not always observe learners in the workplace and action plans for improvement are not always followed up.

139. Some learners' progress reviews are weak. Progress reviews are not always carried out in accordance with contractual requirements. Workplace supervisors are not sufficiently involved in learners' progress reviews and there is some poor action-planning and target-setting. There is insufficient reinforcement of equality of opportunity, diversity, and health and safety issues during the reviews.

### **Leadership and management**

140. In response to learners' poor progress, the RAF has introduced good strategies to improve achievement. Key skills qualifications are now completed before learners leave their training colleges. Work-based assessors and internal verifiers have been appointed at operational stations, and changes in RAF policy have linked career progression to achievement. There have recently been improvements in framework achievement.

141. There is weak management of on-the-job training. At some operational stations learners do not begin the technical certificate until the NVQ is complete. Management of training is often reactive and there is insufficient planning of learners' progress. For example, as a reaction to slow progress, qualified assessors have been established at most operational stations. However, some learners are still assessed by post and have little or no personal contact with their specialist assessors. Some assessors are struggling to make progress against a large backlog of learners, some of whom have had little contact with assessors to date. Where there are still shortages of assessors and internal verifiers, suitably qualified personnel such as apprenticeship co-ordinators are not used to support the assessors. There are uncertainties over the roles and responsibilities of apprenticeship co-ordinators, and learners are only given very general advice and guidance on NVQ progress and targets during their 12-weekly reviews. Workplace supervisors are seldom included in the review process and there is little planned on-the-job training. There are inadequate arrangements to ensure that all learners are given sufficient opportunities to gather evidence for their portfolio. Some learners are employed in areas where they get few chances to carry out suitable trade tasks. Others are moved between locations to ensure that they can collect suitable evidence.

142. The self-assessment report accurately identifies most of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors.

## Business administration, management & professional

Business administration, management & professional		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Business administration</b> - Apprenticeships for young people	388	3

### **Business administration**

#### *Strengths*

- good and improving retention
- good achievement of NVQs
- effective on-the-job training
- good resources
- good support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- slow progress towards framework achievement
- insufficient use of initial assessment
- insufficient workplace assessment
- no co-ordinated strategy for the improvement of training programme

### **Achievement and standards**

143. Although participation on the apprenticeship programme is voluntary, there are very few early leavers. Over the past three years, an average of 85 per cent of learners have either been retained or are still in learning. All learners starting in the year 2004-05 are still in learning.

144. The NVQ achievement rate is good. Personnel administrators complete their NVQ during off-the-job training before they are posted to their operational base. All the personnel administrators recruited in 2002-03 and 2003-04 have achieved their NVQs, and the 2004-05 starters are making good progress. Catering accountants and medical administrators who work towards the NVQ in their workplace have a much slower rate of achievement.

145. Learners make slow progress towards completing their apprenticeship frameworks and the approach to target-setting is weak. There has been a downward trend in completions since 2001-02. This is being dealt with through the appointment of roving assessors who contact learners and provide combined progress reviews and coaching and assessment sessions in the workplace.

146. Personnel administrators should take an examination-based qualification in IT as

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part of their apprenticeship. There are insufficient opportunities for them to do this. The required key skill in application of number is not related to their job role or put into the context of their work.

147. There is some good work in NVQ and key skills portfolios, and medical administration apprentices take all six key skills, which is beyond the requirements of the business administration framework.

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	57		205		149		105		40							
Retained*	0		28	14	127	85	98	93	40	100							
Successfully completed	0		28	14	32	21	25	24	17	42							
Still in learning	57		154	75	93	62	66	63	18	45							

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

## Quality of education and training

148. On-the-job training is very effective. When learners join their first posting they shadow a more experienced member of staff for up to two months, gradually carrying out work of increasing complexity. The RAF's trade ability tests are used to reinforce NVQ learning and develop learners' competence in the workplace, but they relate specifically to the apprentices' job role and are not linked to the NVQ. When necessary, learners are given additional individual training. Medical administrators have one day a week of training in clinical and administrative skills. This is focused on the job but takes into account the requirements of the NVQ. One operational station allocates a mentor to each learner in order to improve on what they learned in preliminary training. Learners interviewed spoke highly of the skills they were gaining.

149. There are good resources available to learners. Staff hold appropriate qualifications and have good opportunities for continuing professional development. All staff have had recent assessor updating to meet the new standards. Training rooms are very well resourced, although the accommodation for personnel learners at RAF Halton has no natural light. Personnel learners have access to a very good simulated environment, with all equipment, such as telephone switchboards, meeting current industrial standards. Closed circuit television is available to record performance. Simulated registry and general work stations are used to relate tasks more closely to the workplace. All the stations visited had an electronic learning centre, access to learndirect, and a well-stocked library.

150. Instructors and assessors are very supportive and can be accessed easily in the schools, on visits to the stations, or by telephone or e-mail. At the secretarial training squadron, one instructor/assessor is a qualified counsellor. Instructors at the secretarial training squadron arrange additional evening key skills sessions to help learners who are having difficulties with application of number and communications. Learners commented favourably on the good support available. Many supervisors allow time during the working day for learners to complete the various components of their framework by visiting the education centres. One supervisor at RAF Lyneham arranged additional individual training and placed learners with more experienced workers when it became obvious that they were going to fail their trade ability tests. He then arranged for the pay increase linked to success to be backdated to the day they first took the tests. Reviewers in the workplace are flexible in adapting programmes to suit the needs of individual learners. For example, one learner who has changed jobs and is finding difficulty in generating evidence for her optional units has been switched to different optional units with a more flexible approach to assessment. Induction is satisfactory and covers all the essentials for learners such as health and safety and NVQ processes. Progress reviews are thorough, but supervisors and assessors are not routinely involved which makes realistic target-setting difficult and does little to encourage achievement. There is a website available which contains useful information and communication links for learners.

151. There is a satisfactory range of provision to meet the needs of learners. There is good use of the trade ability tests, which take place in the workplace, to enhance the apprenticeship framework. For medical administrators, the training centre has worked with the awarding body to develop a technical certificate that is closely related to their job role. All medical administrators achieve all six key skills, but there is little choice of optional units, as these are prescribed by the schools before the learner enters the workplace. All learners are recruited to level 2 programmes although many have already achieved qualifications at level 3 and above and find the work unchallenging. There are satisfactory progression routes available to level 3 programmes.

152. Off-the-job training is satisfactory. Learners comment on its thoroughness and appreciate the regular tests of understanding. Training takes place in small groups and there is additional help available for difficult tasks. However, there is little differentiation and the pace of delivery is that of the slowest learner. Off-the-job training is very instructor centred and learners interviewed commented on the reliance on computerised presentations in background knowledge sessions. Some learners expressed a preference for a more cohesive approach to training that would make the transition from the school to the workplace easier. The schools rarely cover tasks in enough depth for learners to be able to tackle them with confidence in their first posting.

153. There is insufficient use of initial assessment. Many learners have little recollection of any initial assessment and the results are not recorded on individual learning plans. A change in the type of initial assessment used has meant that literacy and numeracy are no longer noted as areas of development. Assessors are not always aware of learners' support needs and line managers are not informed of the results of initial assessment. The only prior learning accredited is for key skills, although some learners have level 3

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qualifications in business.

154. There is insufficient workplace assessment. NVQ training for personnel administration learners takes place off the job using simulated activities. There is a significant shortage of work-based assessors in catering accounts, and none at all in medical administration. There are 20 assessors currently in training, but the two qualified assessors based at the training school are also the internal verifiers so cannot countersign assessments. Arrangements are in place to put a work-based assessor in medical administration on every station by the end of 2005. However, the present lack of assessors means that some learners have not yet started their NVQ. Assessment of learners' background knowledge remains thorough.

### **Leadership and management**

155. Local management of the programmes is satisfactory. Meetings take place regularly and minutes include actions and a development plan. The staff teams are small and cohesive with good informal communications. Internal verification includes standardisation meetings and the monitoring of assessors as well as portfolio verification. Staff have access to a wide range of training and professional development. There are mechanisms in place for the sharing of good practice although they are not always used. Learners are well protected and any oppressive behaviour is dealt with promptly and effectively. However, promotion of equality of opportunity concentrates on bullying and harassment. There is little promotion of equality and diversity in the review process, and few programmes to update learners or raise their awareness. Quality assurance policies are satisfactory, but the emphasis is on control and auditing rather than ensuring that all learners have the same quality of learning experience. However, there are some course reviews with positive outcomes. For example, feedback from learners led to better joining instructions for one programme. All staff had the opportunity to contribute to the self-assessment report, which accurately identified most of the strengths and weaknesses found by inspectors.

156. There is no co-ordinated strategy to improve training programmes. The three schools have all adopted different strategies to improve framework achievements but there has been no formal evaluation of these strategies. There is poor monitoring of the progress of catering accountants and medical administrators. There is no liaison over management data, and each school is unaware of trends in the others. Line managers are not effectively involved in the learning process. They receive little systematic information about the requirements of the framework and are not routinely sent copies of review documents. Assessors in personnel administration have not been deployed to ease the shortage of assessors in catering accounts and medical administration, although this is now beginning to happen.

## Information & communications technology

Information & communications technology		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Using IT</i> - Apprenticeships for young people	342	3

### *Using IT*

#### *Strengths*

- particularly good retention
- very good framework achievement at the Central Air Traffic Control School
- very good teaching and learning
- good accommodation and physical resources
- programme well matched to learners' career aspirations

#### *Weaknesses*

- very poor achievement rates at the Joint School of Photographic Interpretation and the School of Fighter Control
- very slow progress by some learners
- insufficient assessors in some operational stations
- insufficiently individualised learning plans and progress reviews

## Achievement and standards

157. Retention is very good at all three schools. During the period 2000-01 to 2002-03 the average retention was 88 per cent. Of the learners who started in 2003-04 and 2004-05 11 per cent have completed their framework and a further 70 per cent are still in learning.

158. Learners acquire very good practical and personal skills during their intensive trade training. They develop self-confidence, team-working skills and interpersonal skills through highly structured programmes, with weekly self-assessment and clear feedback on their strengths and areas for improvement. Within a few months of completing their trade training they hold very responsible junior positions. Achievement rates are satisfactory at 42 per cent in 2000-01, 53 per cent in 2001-02 and 38 per cent in 2002-03, with a further 146 learners or 32 per cent from those years still in learning. However, these overall rates mask very good achievement rates of over 70 per cent at the Central Air Traffic Control School and the very poor achievement at the School of Fighter Control and the Joint School of Photographic Interpretation. The rate of achievement is starting to improve in all three schools, and some learners are now completing their apprenticeship in nine months.

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159. Some learners are making very slow progress. Some portfolios contain no evidence although the learners have been on programme for more than 18 months. A quarter of the learners who started in 2000-01 and 2001-02 are still in learning and have yet to complete their apprenticeship.

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02		2000-01								
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	50		214		200		170		80							
Retained*	0		28	13	165	82	154	91	79	99							
Successfully completed	0		28	13	75	38	90	53	34	42							
Still in learning	42		154	72	84	42	41	24	21	26							

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

## Quality of education and training

160. Teaching and learning are very good, and benefit from good-quality resources. Sessions are highly structured with information given in clear, measurable steps so that learners understand the concepts and can demonstrate their competence in a simulated environment. The trade training is intense and effective, and takes place in small classes. Learners are highly motivated, and are challenged and inspired by their experience. There is constant verbal checking that learning is taking place, and instructors use a wide variety of teaching styles. A series of thorough revision sessions helps learners gain confidence and prepare effectively for examinations. Key skills training is integrated well with the trade training programme. Learners plan their key skills assignments and carry them out using work-based projects. The assignments provide good opportunities for gaining evidence and many complete or nearly complete the key skills requirements before moving to their operational station. All learners take wider key skills qualifications at level 1, and the achievement rate is high at one centre and improving at the others. There is good on-the-job training at the operational stations which develops the learners' newly acquired skills under real work pressures. Line managers are very supportive and allocate demanding tasks to the learners. Every on-the-job activity has a clear training objective and the learner is considered competent when every criteria for the task is met.

161. ICT resources are very good. The trade training rooms are equipped with an adequate number of modern desktop computers and networked printers. In one school all learners are issued with their own laptop to use during their trade training. All learners have access to an on-site learning centre, a well-equipped library and to the RAF intranet. The instructors are highly experienced, competent staff with good subject knowledge. There is good uptake of civilian vocational qualifications in teaching, assessing, and

learning and development. One member of staff is working towards a level 4 qualification in English. An instructor is available out of hours on four evenings a week to offer extra tuition. The self-assessment report identified the RAF's resources as a strength.

162. There are too few assessors at some operational stations. Some learners have been withdrawn because their school is unable to support them. There has been too much staff turnover in key accreditation posts at the School of Fighter Control and the Joint School of Photographic Interpretation. The self-assessment process identified this weakness and both centres are starting to make progress in dealing with the problems. It is too soon to judge the effectiveness of the new arrangements.

163. The assessment practice at the three schools is satisfactory. The Central Air Traffic Control School is building a strong team of assessors, and has 28 part-time vocational assessors, appropriately qualified and with very good occupational competence. Eighty expert vocational witnesses support the assessors. Some assessors have a caseload of eight to 12 learners and support them weekly, assessing them when they are ready. This is dramatically increasing the achievement rate. The School of Fighter Control is also significantly increasing the number of assessors. However at some operational stations some learners still do not get enough support from trade staff. Many line managers are trained as assessors. Good use is made of real work activities and evidence is presented in well-structured portfolios. However, portfolios contain written questions and answers as performance evidence. Learners complete their online testing in key skills in their own time. Countersigning happens remotely and sometimes learners are only given verbal feedback which is not formally recorded.

164. All learners take an initial assessment during their eight-week trade training irrespective of their previous achievements. Following a recent change to the programme this is no longer followed up with any further diagnostic tests. Learners who need to develop their key skills use occupationally relevant books developed by the NVQ centre. Further support is available through the learning centre.

165. The learners gain excellent trade skills far in excess of those required by the apprenticeship framework. The job roles are matched well to the qualifications and it is easy for learners to gather evidence in the workplace. The off-the-job programmes are well organised and the structure of training for learners is good and intense. The focus is on gaining good trade skills and graduating to the operational stations. Learners also improve their physical fitness through regular exercise. The apprenticeship framework is scheduled for 35 hours out of the eight to 10 weeks of trade training. Learners also gain transferable skills for use both within the RAF and in civilian life. The flight operation assistants continue to make structured progress, improving attitudes, discipline and teamwork skills alongside on-the-job training.

166. Trainers provide good levels of support for learners, encouraging them to progress to higher level courses in computing. Learners' success is celebrated through internal certificates, presentations and photographs displayed in central areas. Pastoral support and advice and guidance are also available if needed.

167. There are few challenging targets in progress review documents or individual learning plans. Many learners have identical individual learning plans with identical achievement dates, and take the same optional units despite working in very different operational stations and having significantly different individual needs. Target-setting and progress reviews for some learners are poorly developed. Targets in individual learning plans are often vague. Some progress reviews are missed and some reviews take place over the telephone. Some learners get copies of the review documents while others do not. Line managers are rarely involved in progress reviews. There is insufficient interim target-setting and no reinforcement of equality of opportunity.

### **Leadership and management**

168. NVQ staff have a clear vision for the apprenticeship programme. They have clear job roles and access to good staff development. There are well-structured procedures for key processes. The operational management of the assessment groups is highly organised with a systematic approach to record-keeping. The School of Fighter Control is effectively managing some major changes to the way learners are deployed and to the NVQ. There have been several initiatives to promote a better understanding of the scheme within the trade, including a two-day annual seminar, supported by a wide range of external agencies and well attended by RAF personnel, a four-monthly newsletter circulated throughout the trade, and regular presentations at higher level internal training events. Recently, sector-specific team meetings have been introduced to share ideas across the three schools. All three schools use a common management information system, but the data is incomplete and is not analysed sufficiently to help the decision-making processes. Internal verification is weak at the Joint School of Photographic Interpretation and is not planned well enough to ensure an appropriate level of support is given to inexperienced assessors. The internal verification processes are improving across all three schools.

169. The self-assessment report is fairly accurate and sufficiently critical.

## Retailing, customer service & transportation

Retailing, customer service & transportation		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Transportation</b> - Apprenticeships for young people	80	1
<b>Warehousing and distribution</b> - Apprenticeships for young people	133	3

### **Transportation**

#### *Strengths*

- very good achievement and retention
- high standard of learners' work
- good off-the-job training
- excellent training resources
- good assessment practice
- well-led and managed provision

#### *Weaknesses*

- no significant weaknesses identified

### **Warehousing and distribution**

#### *Strengths*

- very good achievement of key skills qualifications
- good development of skills and knowledge
- particularly good resources
- good support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor assessment and verification practice
- ineffective progress reviews
- inadequate communication of programme requirements

## Achievement and standards

170. Transportation learners achieve a very good level of framework completion. This has increased over the past three years from 80 per cent to over 85 per cent. Retention is very good at over 90 per cent. Since the NVQ programme began in 2001, 251 apprentices have started programmes, 144 have successfully completed and 80 are still in learning. Only 27 have failed to complete the full framework, and most of these have

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transferred to other trades within the RAF.

171. Transportation learners produce good work. They collect diverse evidence in the workplace, where they perform a range of tasks including passenger handling, baggage control, and cargo loading and unloading in their day-to-day duties. Their portfolios are well presented, demonstrate a good standard of knowledge and understanding and are supported by a wide range of product evidence that includes photographs of their work. Many learners benefit by taking additional training, including courses in ICT, the handling of dangerous goods, and driving lift trucks and large vehicles. Learners' attendance and punctuality is outstanding.

172. In warehousing and distribution, the achievement rate for key skills is very good. For learners starting in 2003-04 it was 91 per cent, and in 2004-05 it is 80 per cent so far with a further 12 per cent of learners still in learning. Learners produce good key skills evidence, based on a set of assignments. These show a high standard of work and detail, demonstrating learners' skills in communication, application of number and ICT. The achievement rate for apprenticeships is satisfactory at an average of 49 per cent in the past two years.

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	63		258		70		67									
Retained*	0		0	0	65	93	65	97									
Successfully completed	0		101	39	60	86	55	82									
Still in learning	61		152	59	0	0	0	0									

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

## Quality of education and training

173. The quality of transportation instruction is good. Classes have clear aims and well-defined objectives. Lesson plans are prepared centrally, evaluated and frequently updated. Instructors are particularly enthusiastic, knowledgeable and experienced in movements. Their directions are consistently very clear and concise. Visual aids and videos are informative and clear, and there is good use of aircraft models. Learners participate in practical operational activities such as passenger departures. Learning is very effectively reviewed, evaluated and consolidated at the end of sessions using a variety of techniques. In some training sessions, such as those for key skills, there is very good coaching. Role-play and team teaching are used to excellent effect.

174. Transportation resources are excellent. Classrooms are well equipped with a good range of interactive visual aids and aircraft models. Good use is made of videos and a well-equipped cinema. Learners are issued with laptop computers and have access to a good ICT centre and library. They use a large training hangar with full-size mock-ups of current transport aircraft. A wide variety of loads, including helicopters, is used for good practical loading instruction.

175. Transportation NVQ assessments are carried out to a high standard in the workplace. Thirty-two assessors assess learners under normal operational conditions at 10 locations in the United Kingdom and abroad. The conditions involve considerable operational pressures such as ensuring weight and distribution loads are calculated quickly to enable aircraft to take off on time, or carrying out passenger clearance procedures sometimes with very senior personnel and VIPs. Assessors use a wide range of assessment methods confirmed by extensive questioning. Where the assessor is also the learner's line manager, a second assessor is available for reference and confirmation. Internal verification meets awarding body requirements but is largely left until the end of the programme.

176. Training and assessment in transportation fully meets the requirements of the operational stations and the needs of the learners. The strong links between the operational stations and the Defence Movements School ensure that the training is kept up to date. The school has effectively cross-referenced the RAF trade requirements to the NVQ standards. Learners also benefit by the school being located at a main operational station which provides learners with real operational experience.

177. In transportation, there is good support for learners. Those with special needs are given individual support, including extra help with literacy, numeracy and language where needed. Dyslexia and other learning support needs are identified at initial training school, and further assessed at the Defence Movements School. All learners are given the coloured rulers that help those with dyslexia, so that individuals are not identified. Duty rotas are changed to accommodate single parents with childcare needs.

178. In warehousing and distribution, learners develop good skills and knowledge. Off-the-job training is effective and well structured, and includes both background knowledge and practical sessions. Learners develop good supply skills in a simulated working environment. Scheduled on-the-job training at operating bases greatly enhances learners' capabilities in a range of operational supply activities, and some learners already have particularly responsible job roles by this stage of their training. Learners also greatly improve their wider personal skills during training. They grow in confidence and begin to use their own initiative, as well as substantially broadening their team-working and problem-solving skills. They can see the progress they have made, and their line managers confirm this. Senior squadron officers acknowledge the higher calibre of learner coming onto operating bases since the programme was introduced.

179. Training resources in warehousing and distribution are particularly good. Training accommodation is of a high standard, and very well equipped. Facilities include classrooms with electronic presentation technology, computer suites for supply software

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training, and a purpose-built simulated working environment. This has dedicated telephone and computer systems, and fitted-out storage, receipt and despatch facilities. Learners have access to the local defence services learning centre and other computer learning suites, and the training materials used by staff and learners are of a very high quality. All programme staff have substantial experience of service stores, which is regularly updated. The operational stations provide learners with a highly suitable working environment, with industry-standard storage and transit facilities, communications and computer systems.

180. Support for warehousing and distribution apprentices is good. Additional learning needs are identified through a range of assessment methods and supported appropriately. However, the need for support is not always identified quickly enough, and the support is not systematically evaluated to ensure its effectiveness. Learners feel well supported by all staff, and their physical and social welfare is consistently monitored throughout the training period. Learners under 18 years of age are assigned a mentor, to ensure their overall safety and well-being. Some learners are given substantial and sustained support in coping with personal difficulties. Counsellors and chaplains are available to all learners, and some training staff are qualified counsellors. Learners who want to take part in additional activities such as sport or charity work are given time away from their duties to do so.

181. Assessment and verification practice is poor in warehousing and distribution. Learners' evidence for NVQ mandatory units contains little detail of their personal performance. Assessors' observation reports are very brief, and do not indicate in sufficient detail how learners met the qualification standards. Feedback on learners' performance during assessment is not recorded on assessment reports, and learners are not assessed in their workplace by appropriate assessors. Test activities to be completed at operating stations are relevant to learners' supply jobs, but are not referenced to NVQ standards in their log books. Evidence of learners' performance in these on-the-job activities relies heavily on witness statements, which are often inadequate, and do not always confirm learners' performance over time. The statements do not indicate whether necessary observation or monitoring has been carried out. Learners also spend insufficient time in individual supply sections to enable them to prove their competence over a sustained period. NVQ portfolios do not contain a broad enough range of evidence, and make little use of work documents, learners' personal statements or oral questioning by assessors or witnesses. The supply activity log books are relatively new, and further improvements are planned as part of the supply training development plan.

182. Internal verification practice in warehousing and distribution is poor. The internal verification strategy is inadequate, as is the forward planning of sampling. Recording of internal verification is poor. Sampling reports seldom provide action points, but where they do, they fail to show that assessors have been made aware of these and that they have taken appropriate action.

183. Reviews of warehousing and distribution learners' progress are ineffective, and focus only on overall completion of key skills qualifications, the workplace log-book and the qualification framework. Learners are not set specific, measurable and time-bound

targets. Learning plans are highly standardised, and few set targets for individual learners. They carry little information on the results of initial assessment or on any support needs identified. They also fail to remind learners of important equal opportunities and health and safety issues, or to check whether support needs are being met. Some reviews are carried out over the telephone, and some even take place in the learner's absence. Line managers are not routinely involved in reviewing learners' progress.

### **Leadership and management**

184. The transportation provision is well led and managed. The Defence Movements School has consistently achieved its challenging framework completion targets over the past three years. It has a highly effective system for monitoring learners' progress. Staff are well trained and qualified as both instructors and assessors. Many have good teaching qualifications, and all are experienced movements personnel. There is good staff development linked to six-monthly appraisals. The effective range of quarterly meetings and six-monthly conferences demonstrates good internal communications. Good practice is shared within the school and with assessment staff at the operational stations. There are good links with the senior staff at the operational stations and with external bodies such as the sector skills council and civilian air transport companies. Resources are deployed effectively. Quality assurance procedures are in place and are subject to an extensive range of audits. The quality of instruction is monitored regularly. Learners' views are sought every six months and on exit. The self-assessment report for transportation was produced in consultation with staff from the Defence Movements School, a selection of learners, and assessors and staff in the operational stations.

185. The requirements of the warehousing and distribution programme are not communicated well to staff at operational stations. Some senior managers have little understanding of the programme and its significance to supply training and learners' development. Many line managers do not understand their responsibilities in relation to learners' programmes, and do not know how to use programme documents such as the trade ability test log book. They have a poor awareness of NVQ standards, and how they relate to supply activities. Some learners do not understand how the log book links into the NVQ process. All the training school staff were involved in the self-assessment for warehousing and distribution, but most officers at operational stations were not.

186. Equality of opportunity is reinforced with all learners during their training. They demonstrate a satisfactory understanding of the topic and it forms an integral part of all personnel development programmes. The staff have all received equal opportunities training.

187. The self-assessment report identified many of the strengths found by inspectors, particularly in transportation. However inspectors identified additional weaknesses in warehousing and distribution.

## Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b><i>Hospitality and catering</i></b> - Apprenticeships for young people	133	2
<b><i>Leisure, sport and recreation</i></b> - Apprenticeships for young people	51	1

### ***Hospitality and catering***

#### *Strengths*

- very good achievement
- very good retention rates
- very good teaching in practical cookery sessions
- good, well-equipped working and training environments
- very good support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- some weak NVQ assessment practice
- poor understanding of the hospitality NVQ and framework for many workplace supervisors

### ***Leisure, sport and recreation***

#### *Strengths*

- very good achievement
- very high retention rates
- good off-the-job training
- good resources to develop practical skills
- extensive arrangements to support learners
- very effective leadership and management

#### *Weaknesses*

- incomplete gathering of information

## **Achievement and standards**

188. Achievement rates and retention are good in hospitality and catering. Of the 51 learners who started programmes in 2002-03, over 80 per cent were retained and completed the framework. Of the 2003-04 intake, almost two-thirds have completed the framework and 34 are still in learning, and of the 109 in the 2004-05 intake, three have

completed the framework and 98 are still in learning. Fifty of these learners have completed their key skills qualifications and 78 their technical certificates. Until recently learners have not been registered with the awarding body or the LSC until nine weeks after the start of their trade training at RAF Halton. One learner who started in 2002-03 has made slow progress towards achieving the NVQ and has not yet passed any of the NVQ assessments carried out at the station.

189. In practical training sessions, hospitality and catering learners demonstrate good technical skills and good hand-eye co-ordination. Most learners at operational stations have good technical skills and create satisfactory dishes. Many take part in competitions in the RAF and externally and achieve very good results.

190. In sports, learners' achievement is very good. The achievement rates for apprenticeship frameworks are outstanding, and learners gain some of the key skills qualifications at a higher level than required by the framework. Learners' work is very good. They are highly motivated and develop very good personal, team and learning skills. Learners make very good progress and have good opportunities for promotion. Most achieve additional qualifications. Retention rates in sports are also very good at 84 per cent and 92 per cent for the 2001-02 and 2002-03 learners respectively. All 43 learners starting since 2003 are still in learning.

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

<b>LSC funded work-based learning</b>																
<b>Advanced apprenticeships</b>	<b>2004-05</b>		<b>2003-04</b>		<b>2002-03</b>		<b>2001-02</b>		<b>2000-01</b>							
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	18		25		37		19		31						
Retained*	0		0	0	34	92	16	84	21	68						
Successfully completed	0		0	0	26	70	16	84	21	68						
Still in learning	18		25	100	8	22	0	0	0	0						

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

<b>LSC funded work-based learning</b>																
<b>Apprenticeships</b>	<b>2004-05</b>		<b>2003-04</b>		<b>2002-03</b>											
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Number of starts	109		154		51										
Retained*	0		132	86	42	82										
Successfully completed	3		98	64	41	80										
Still in learning	98		34	22	1	2										

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

## Quality of education and training

191. Practical cookery teaching sessions at the Catering Training Squadron are well planned with clear aims and objectives which are shared with learners. Clear demonstrations are given and the sessions are divided into short sections so learners can remember what they have seen while practising the work themselves. Oral questioning includes all learners, and is used well to draw out their knowledge and check their understanding. Health and safety are reinforced throughout the sessions. Learners are motivated well in the sessions, and given thorough feedback at each stage. In the workplace, catering supervisors provide good training. Learners work under the close supervision of an experienced colleague, usually a junior non-commissioned officer. As they gain in experience, they begin the work needed for the trade ability tests. Learners are not allowed to work unsupervised until they have completed these tests satisfactorily. Inspectors saw unsatisfactory sessions in one hospitality subject. The content had not been updated since 1995 despite several changes in legislation and the sessions were insufficiently planned.

192. The hospitality learners have good working and training environments. At the Catering Training Squadron, the classrooms are well furnished and have interactive whiteboards and data projectors. There are good displays, including posters and photographs of learners' work. However, course notes for instructors and learners do not always reflect current practice or legislation. Hospitality and catering instructors are appropriately qualified and experienced, and the kitchens are spacious and have a good range of well-maintained industry-standard equipment, but the knives learners use are of poor quality. The bar and restaurant areas have industry-standard resources including optics and free-flow beer lines. There are closed-circuit television cameras and video recorders in the bar, restaurant and reception simulation suite which are used well to record learners' performance in practical activities. At the operational stations, the kitchens, dining areas, reception areas and bars have an appropriate range of equipment. There is good reinforcement of health and safety, and food hygiene in most kitchens, with separate areas for the preparation of vegetables and salads, meat, and sweets. However, in one kitchen, which has been housed in temporary accommodation for the past 13 years, the heating and ventilation are inadequate. The course planning team has had instructor training, but its members have no previous teaching experience and do not always maintain learners' interest.

193. There is very good support for hospitality learners. At the catering training squadron, hospitality learners are assigned to an instructor who is an NCO and provides pastoral and learning support. They can also go to the accreditation team if they wish to talk to someone outside the instructor team. Learners feel confident about approaching staff with any problems. At their operational stations, the hospitality learners work with an experienced member of staff who provides general support. Most stations also have a catering trainer who will provide further support for learners across the station. Instructors are trained to recognise specific learning difficulties and to provide basic support. If necessary, learners are referred to appropriate specialists for further learning or pastoral support.

194. In sport, there is good off-the-job training. None of the training sessions observed were unsatisfactory and in most cases the teaching and learning was appropriately challenging. Programmes are set at a level that motivates and stimulates learners. In practical lessons, some good individual coaching enables learners to understand their progress to date and how they could improve. Practice is linked effectively to background knowledge, and learners' technical vocabulary is developed. There is a peer observation system to encourage learners to support each other.

195. Sports learners have access to good resources, including swimming pools, sports fields, all-weather sports pitches, an athletics track, sports halls, and fitness and rehabilitation centres. There are particularly good off-the-job training facilities. The operational stations where learners' on-the-job training takes place have appropriate accommodation, facilities and equipment. There is a wide range of equipment to develop practical learning skills in sports such as circuit training, gymnastics, fitness assessment and training. Most of it is fit for purpose and some is state of the art. Learners are given a physical education kit and specialist clothing for activities such as adventure training. ICT resources are adequate, although a significant number of learners would have liked to be able to borrow laptop computers. Most of the classrooms used to teach background knowledge are good, but one is too small, untidy and has equipment lying around.

196. Sports learners have access to extensive support arrangements. Initial assessment is very comprehensive and identifies learners' basic skills needs and any group trends. Very good support is provided in the form of additional lessons or appropriate individual coaching. Learners have good pastoral support from a range of staff including their course director, assessor, instructor and mentor, and regard it very highly. They feel confident about discussing problems with the staff. However, a few learners are experiencing difficulties with the intensity of the off-the-job training but do not feel able to admit to this for fear of losing face.

197. Programmes meet needs of learners. All learners are on programmes appropriate to their career aspirations and the jobs they will be doing. There is good use of additional activities such as visits to markets and restaurants to broaden hospitality and catering learners' experiences. Sports learners can take qualifications in mountain leadership, coaching, treatment of injuries and indoor cycling. They can specialise as adventure training, remedial treatment or parachute jump instructors.

198. Most progress reviews for hospitality and catering learners are satisfactory. They are carried out in the workplace at least every 12 weeks by accreditation staff, and do not always involve the work supervisor or manager. Learners review their progress and agree action points for achievement by the next review date. Learners and their line manager receive a copy of the review document and a reminder letter at least three weeks before the planned review date. The targets set often focus on completion of aspects of the framework, rather than on skill development, and they are not always measurable or accompanied by deadlines. Equality of opportunity and health and safety are not discussed. Some review documents are poorly completed. Individual learning

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plans are updated to reflect changes to target and actual completion dates for framework components.

199. Teaching of numeracy and communication is satisfactory. Members of the accreditation team teach key skills in blocks. For hospitality and catering learners the blocks are currently concentrated at the end of the course, but they are shortly to be moved to the beginning of the programmes to improve motivation and ensure completion.

200. In sport, assessment and monitoring of progress is satisfactory. There is a clear assessment structure and process, and work has been done on linking the NVQ with the wider training for physical training instructors. There is a good ratio of assessors to learners. However, inspectors saw some assessors who were observing activities but were distracted and talking to other staff. Assessors' feedback does not always link clearly to the framework standards and some learners are not made aware of the level of competence they have achieved. Assessors' feedback on some documents contains basic spelling and grammar mistakes.

201. There is some weak assessment practice in hospitality and catering. Chefs are assessed using phase tests in practical teaching rooms, and trade ability tests at their operational station. Phase tests do not show learners' competence over a period of time and are not explicitly linked to the NVQ standards. Although they do not take place in a realistic work environment, the assessment is rigorous. An instructor who has not taught the learner marks the tests using a detailed marking scheme. Learners receive comprehensive verbal and written feedback. Food and drink service learners are assessed in a realistic working environment at the Catering Training Squadron. Line managers or supervisors carry out trade ability tests for hospitality and catering learners in the workplace over a period of time. Stations use their own criteria for the trade ability tests and do not cross-reference them sufficiently to the NVQ standards. The trade ability tests are a satisfactory assessment, but many of the assessors are not qualified. The results are counter-signed by occupational specialists, but many of them are not qualified assessors or internal verifiers either. Trade ability tests have recently been reclassified as witness testimonies.

202. The written feedback in portfolios is identical for all learners in hospitality and does not reflect individuals' performance. There is little supplementary evidence in portfolios although it is mentioned in monitoring documents. Learners complete the background knowledge sections of their NVQ during their initial trade training at the Catering Training Squadron, and many think they have finished the NVQ when they leave the squadron. Internal verification of portfolios has not identified the shortcomings in assessment practice.

## **Leadership and management**

203. The management of the sports provision is very effective and has made significant improvements to the provision. Three new assessors have been appointed, assessment planning has been improved, and there are strong links with the sector skills council and

external consultants. There is very effective communication and a clear strategy to ensure that all learners achieve the apprenticeship framework. Teaching and learning are frequently observed, and the observers have been trained and given detailed criteria to work to.

204. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Learners are made aware of their rights and responsibilities. They have a good understanding of the topic and feel comfortable approaching staff for advice or support or to make a complaint. Some learners have completed an accredited equality and diversity training programme. Staff training in equality and diversity is satisfactory.

205. There has been some ineffective communication in hospitality and catering. The information given to potential learners before recruitment is not always accurate. The NVQs and apprenticeship frameworks have been added to a pre-existing programme. Although the accreditation team has run workshops for instructors about the NVQ and framework requirements, many instructors still do not fully understand them. Most workplace supervisors do not understand the framework, and many are not told the results of progress reviews.

206. The catering accreditation team produced a self-assessment report in consultation with some of the other staff, but without the full involvement of instructors and workplace supervisors. It was intended to form the hospitality section of the RAF self-assessment report but the points made were largely missing from the final version of that report. The report correctly identified many strengths and weaknesses, but inspectors found additional strengths and weaknesses. There have been several recent initiatives to deal with weaknesses in hospitality training but it is too early to judge their effect.

207. In sports, the gathering of information is incomplete. Instructors are observed but the weaknesses and good practice identified by the observations are not identified or passed on. There is not enough monitoring of on-the-job training, especially of the additional qualifications, or of trends in equality and diversity. The self-assessment process is incomplete.

## Health, social care & public services

Health, social care & public services		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Public services</b> - Apprenticeships for young people	340	4

### **Public services**

#### *Strengths*

- good retention
- good development of occupational skills
- good resources
- very good support for learners
- good promotion and understanding of equality of opportunity

#### *Weaknesses*

- poor framework achievement for RAF Regiment learners
- very slow progress for some learners
- weak management of apprenticeship programme

### **Achievement and standards**

208. Retention is good on both the RAF Police and RAF Regiment programmes. In 2002-03, retention was 87 per cent, and in 2003-04 it rose to 93 per cent. All the learners who have started programmes in 2004-05 are still in learning.

209. Achievement rates for technical certificates and key skills qualifications are satisfactory and improving at 78 per cent for RAF Police training and 73 per cent for the RAF Regiment. However, the achievement rate for full apprenticeship frameworks is poor. In the RAF Regiment, the achievement rate was 9 per cent in 2002-03 and only 2 per cent in 2003-04. Five of the 10 squadrons of the RAF Regiment have failed to achieve any completed frameworks. Achievement of the RAF Police apprenticeship framework, which accounts for 8 per cent of the total learners, is better but is still only 40 per cent. Learners on the old NVQ standards in security, safety and loss prevention are making very slow progress. For example, one learner left the 22-week RAF Police programme with approximately a third of the NVQ completed and three months later had still achieved only just over half the units.

The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03												
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	58		262		84											
Retained*	0		243	93	73	87											
Successfully completed	0		22	8	14	17											
Still in learning	58		223	85	59	70											

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

## Quality of education and training

210. Learners on both the RAF Police and RAF Regiment programmes develop good, transferable, occupational skills. The 22-week RAF Police and 20-week RAF Regiment courses are carefully prepared with very detailed schemes of work and individual lesson plans. Learners' progress is reviewed appropriately by experienced and well-qualified instructors and managers. The monitoring of learners' progress has been improved. The programmes build on learners' initial training, effectively equipping them for the roles they will perform. All learners acquire a wide range of relevant skills including a diverse range of driving qualifications over and above civilian driving licences.

211. RAF Police learners develop very good interviewing skills, using methods that are accepted as best practice in the civilian police force. They are taught control and restraint techniques and the use of firearms by local civilian police staff. RAF Regiment learners acquire a high level of technical skills in the use of industry-standard communications equipment.

212. Learners posted to the Tactical Provost Wing receive excellent continuous professional development through a well-constructed, flexible, individual training programme. The quality of teaching is generally good, although there is not enough differentiated learning in background knowledge sessions. In the best sessions instructors made particularly good use of classroom discussions and role-play exercises. There are also good demonstrations using individual resources for each learner, such as radio equipment for them to assemble. In one good background knowledge session for RAF Police, the instructor used an interactive whiteboard to help learners memorise some difficult definitions of points of law. Learners really enjoyed using the touch screen to move text around the board. After making several attempts, enthusiastically encouraged by their peers, the learners achieved the correct definitions far more quickly than learning by rote.

213. There are good resources at the schools and operational stations. These include

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staff and the physical resources used during the learning programme. All learners are issued with operational-standard personal protective equipment, which is constantly maintained and reviewed for its effectiveness. Learners make effective use of well-equipped ICT suites, laptop computers and digital/audio cameras. Many classrooms have very good technical equipment such as additional computers, digital projectors and interactive whiteboards. Excellent learning materials, including those that are recognised as best practice in the civilian police service, are used for developing interview techniques. All the RAF operational stations provide realistic work environments for learners. Learning centres are available at all camps including those on active duty abroad such as in the Falkland Islands, Northern Ireland and Iraq.

214. Training staff are highly qualified and experienced in their occupational fields. There is a very good programme to raise instructors' and squadron leaders' awareness of specific learning difficulties. They are given up-to-date specialist advice in the form of training sessions, newsletters and CD-ROMs, backed up by advice and guidance from colleagues in the training department. Assessors attend an intensive off-the-job training programme that combines theory and practical application in the workplace. They continue to receive a high level of advice, guidance and support from their internal verifiers.

215. Assessment practice is satisfactory overall. There is very good initial assessment, especially at the RAF Regiment school. Potential RAF Regiment learners must take a three-day practical assessment on the base and in the field. This is effectively used to test their attitude and aptitude. Initial screening is used to identify learners' key skills levels and any possible learning difficulties. However, this information is not used effectively until learners start to under perform during their initial training. Work-based assessment practice is satisfactory. There is appropriate preparation and planning for assessment, and satisfactory notes and feedback are provided promptly to learners.

216. With the approval of the awarding body, RAF Police learners are assessed in a realistic working environment during their final intensive police trade tests. All these learners now leave their programme having achieved their apprenticeship framework. However learners on the old security, safety and loss prevention NVQ make unsatisfactory progress. This qualification has been superceded by an NVQ in providing security services, and the RAF Police training staff have successfully correlated the evidence requirements of the new NVQ with the police training programme.

217. RAF Regiment learners complete their key skills qualifications and technical certificates during their 20 weeks at the training school, and the remainder of the NVQ in the workplace. In the better RAF Regiment squadrons, work-based assessors carry out observations during active tours of duty abroad, using digital cameras, audio equipment and witness testimony. Learners are also encouraged to take key skills examinations in the field learning centres, sometimes under hostile fire in operational areas. This flexible approach enables learners to progress quickly with their learning and achievement of the NVQ. The same assessors also use activities on the camp, such as patrols and guard duty, to gather evidence for the NVQ. However, half of the RAF Regiment squadrons do not carry out any assessments in the workplace.

218. Individual learning plans are satisfactory, although the links between the training school action and learning plans and the apprenticeship plans are not always clear. Learners all follow the same optional units and carry out the same key skills assignments.

219. Learners are very well supported. Training staff regularly make themselves available outside their normal duty hours to provide advice, guidance and extra tuition for learners. On Thursday evenings, one member of staff at the RAF Police school provides a drop in service to help learners prepare for future assessments. When a learner starts to under perform, very good support is provided to enable them to succeed. They are referred to the training and development unit where they receive effective diagnostic testing and/or referral to an educational psychologist. In the RAF Regiment, learners who are diagnosed as having dyslexia, dyscalculia or dyspraxia receive additional hours of support from a specialist instructor. This support is used well to equip learners with simple, effective strategies to cope with their programme. Learners who have additional literacy, language or numeracy needs receive a minimum of 30 hours additional support. This is given in small groups or individually. Learners appreciate the extra help, and in many cases it is the first time their learning difficulties have been recognized. However, there is some stigma attached to only receiving this support after they have failed some part of their primary learning goals.

### **Leadership and management**

220. There is good promotion and understanding of equal opportunities among learners and staff. In the RAF Police Training school, senior uniformed and civilian staff are trained in equality and diversity and there are weekly meetings to discuss the topic. Updating is planned for all training staff. An equal opportunities session is part of the induction for all learners and instructors. There are effective measures to deal with complaints and appeals and to record all minor incidents.

221. There is weak management and co-ordination of the RAF Regiment apprenticeship programme. The co-ordination between the trade school training and the workplace assessment is poor. Successful completion of the apprenticeship is currently more dependent on the interest, motivation and willingness of individual learners and instructors rather than on any clear direction and leadership from senior managers in the area of learning. There are no joint strategies or targets for improving achievement levels. However, staff within the training and accreditation departments have set their own internal targets and are working well to achieve these.

222. The leadership and management of training in the RAF Police and RAF Regiment training schools are satisfactory. Overall, quality assurance of the learning programmes is satisfactory. There is appropriate auditing of files, which are standardised, up to date and complete. Feedback from learners is gathered systematically although the information is not always used effectively. Internal verification is sound and reports from external verifiers are satisfactory. The self-assessment report is accurate and self-critical. Strengths and weaknesses were appropriately supported by judgements and closely matched those of the inspectors.

## Visual & performing arts & media

Visual & performing arts & media		1
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<b>Other contributory areas</b> - Apprenticeships for young people	10	1

### **Other contributory areas**

#### *Strengths*

- outstanding rate of achievement of apprenticeship frameworks
- particularly good retention
- good acquisition of technical and social skills
- very good occupational resources
- good support for learners

#### *Weaknesses*

- insufficient internal verification and course administration resources

### **Achievement and standards**

223. Achievement rates and retention are outstanding. In the past three years, 47 learners out of a possible 51 have completed frameworks.

224. Learners achieve high standards of technical and social skills which are demonstrated by their work in the classroom, their practical activities both in and out of the school, and their portfolios, video-recorded presentations and displays of work. The vocational and professional skills learners acquire benefit the RAF and are designed to help them to resettle successfully into civilian employment when they leave. Learners develop very good vocational skills in a wide range of photographic activities including photographic imagery to support engineering tasks, corporate communications, scene-of-crime photography, air-to-air and air-to-ground photography, portraiture, graphic design and video productions. Learners can also take specialist training in medical and dental applications, crash investigation and covert surveillance work. As an addition to the framework all learners take an examination-based qualification in IT. They all complete online key skills tests and are encouraged to re-sit any that they fail.

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The following table shows the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

LSC funded work-based learning																	
Advanced apprenticeships	2004-05		2003-04		2002-03		2001-02										
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
	Number of starts	10		26		18		7									
Retained*	0		23	88	18	100	6	86									
Successfully completed	0		23	88	18	100	6	86									
Still in learning	10		0	0	0	0	0	0									

\*retained learners are those who have stayed in learning for at least the planned duration of their training programmes, or have successfully completed their programme within the time allowed

**Quality of education and training**

225. The Defence School of Photography has very good occupational resources. Much of the equipment is acquired on a three-year lease, ensuring that it kept up to current professional standards. The equipment is well maintained, and controlled through a strict inventory and a signing-in and out system. Photographic hardware has been updated to accommodate digital imaging rather than wet-process methods. Learners use high-specification cameras and lenses, including extremely long-focus lenses designed for surveillance work. There is a wide selection of lighting resources both for hand-held and studio use. The school also has a comprehensive range of ICT equipment, a dark room, and printing and processing facilities. The real work opportunities for photography at RAF Cosford are also a great asset to the learners.

226. All the instructors have relevant qualifications and experience, and either have, or are working towards, an instructor qualification. Some are working towards further teaching and assessment qualifications. Each member of staff has a development plan which is updated annually. There is a range of lecture and classroom facilities, and learners have access to private study space and the intranet, and controlled access to the internet. There are supported study periods on two evenings a week. Magazines and books are available both in the school and also in the main library.

227. Learners are supported well. Their specific needs are identified and a range of agencies can be called upon to support them. A learner with dyslexia has successfully been supported through the use of handouts in specific fonts on coloured paper, and been given additional time to complete work. Learners' attendance and punctuality are monitored as part of the RAF's standard procedures. There is strong peer support and each group forms a community. The learners are highly motivated and communicate well. They work well in teams and groups and support one another. Within the school there is a strong ethos of supporting learners and recognising individual achievement. The learners have access to large number of well-equipped leisure and sporting facilities within the camp.

228. Learners in photography undertake further diagnostic assessment on arrival at the trade school to establish whether they have any specific learning needs in literacy, language and numeracy and to identify their key skills level. The school uses discussion groups and standard diagnostic tests for key skills.

229. The RAF has clear policies and directives relating to instructors' and managers' duty of care for the learners. There is a mentor working with the latest group of learners who provides a sounding board and source of advice for any problems. Learners can feed back to managers through the review process, and their comments have been used to improve the programme.

230. Most teaching sessions have detailed schemes of work and lesson plans, and the learners understand the lesson objectives. Instructors provide good-quality handouts that contain relevant and current information on techniques and equipment. In background knowledge sessions, they use a range of teaching styles including question and answer, presentation software and the whiteboard. This is complemented by demonstrations of equipment and fittings. The instructors have confidence and authority and there is a good atmosphere in the classrooms. Learners express satisfaction about what they are learning and are happy with the individual support they receive. A large proportion of the practical teaching and learning activities take place away from the school. Learners move around the establishment, either alone or in pairs, using equipment and achieving specific tasks. They maintain contact with the instructor by mobile telephone.

231. Assessment and monitoring of learners' progress are satisfactory. However, the results of initial assessments carried out by the Armed Forces Careers Office are not always shared with the school. Assessments are planned into the programme and marked and graded by a panel. Feedback is given to the learner but is not always recorded in sufficient detail. Individual learning plans are not used to challenge learners to maximise their potential. Internal verification takes place and feedback is given to the assessor. A sampling plan is used to look at a range of learners' work. Key skills are integrated with the programme and are subject to continuing assessment.

### **Leadership and management**

232. The managers of the school set and maintain high standards. The content of the apprenticeship framework has recently changed in response to the needs of the industry. The Defence School of Photography maintains close contact with all three services to ensure the relevance of the programme to the various job roles. There are regular, minuted meetings and action is taken on points raised. Communications are good within the school. New staff are supported through shadowing and mentoring, but postings are short, and there is insufficient clarity about specific responsibilities. Some areas of the budget management are outside the remit of the school and there have been insufficient resources for internal verification and course administration. The internal verifier for the programme has been given another role within the organisation and currently there is no established internal verifier post. However, the arrangements for internal verification have been satisfactory. Some administrative functions have been

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delegated to the school but these have not yet been resourced and the existing staff have not been trained for their new duties.

233. The school's quality assurance processes and policies have a positive effect on the programme. Inspectors agreed with many of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report for photography. However, inspectors identified only one weakness compared to the three in the self-assessment report. The self-assessment process does not take account of the views of all the stakeholders. Satisfactory equality of opportunity policies and procedures are in place and individual members of staff have had training and updating on equality and diversity.