

INSPECTION REPORT

Defence Munitions Centre Gosport

21 July 2005



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

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 aged over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learnndirect** 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.

Pre-inspection analysis

The resources allocated to a cycle 2 inspection are primarily determined by the findings from the previous inspection. Account is also taken of information about achievement and retention obtained from the funding body, and any significant changes in the size or scope of the provision.

Where a provider has received good grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is relatively light. If the provider offers a number of areas of learning, a restricted sample is inspected.

Where a provider has received satisfactory grades in cycle 1, the cycle 2 inspection is less intensive and it is possible that not all areas of learning are included.

Where there are significant unsatisfactory grades from cycle 1, the intensity of the cycle 2 inspection is broadly the same as cycle 1, and all significant areas of learning are inspected.

Providers that have not previously been inspected will receive a full inspection.

Overall effectiveness

The grades given for areas of learning and leadership and management will be used to arrive at a judgement about the overall effectiveness of the provider.

An **outstanding** provider should typically have leadership and management and at least half of the areas of learning judged to be a grade 1. All area of learning grades will be graded 1 or 2.

A **good** provider should have leadership and management and at least half of the area of learning grades judged to be a grade 2 or better. A good training provider should not have any grade 4s, and few grade 3s in the areas of learning.

A **satisfactory** provider should have adequate or better grades in leadership and management and in at least two thirds of the area of learning grades. An adequate provider might have a range of grades across areas of learning, some of which might be graded 4.

Provision will normally be deemed to be **inadequate** where more than one third of the area of learning grades and/or leadership and management are judged to be inadequate.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning.

Grading

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

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

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INSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. Defence Munitions Centre (DMC) Gosport is located on a 450-acre site on the western shore of Portsmouth Harbour. It is a Ministry of Defence (MoD) establishment. It is part of the Defence Storage and Distribution Agency, which in turn is part of the Defence Logistics Organisation.
2. The primary function of DMC Gosport is the maintenance, processing, storage and distribution of ammunition and weapons. The organisation's main customer is the Royal Navy, and other clients include a number of commercial businesses and foreign navies.
3. The advanced apprenticeship programme in engineering maintenance is arranged over three phases and lasts between 32 and 42 months. It is run alongside the MoD standards-based apprentice training scheme and a number of other qualifications. Training over the first 15 months is subcontracted to Flagship Training (Flagship) at HMS Sultan (Sultan). The remainder of the programme is given over to work-based learning in planned work placements across DMC Gosport, together with day release for academic studies at local general further education colleges, including Eastleigh College and Fareham College.
4. Training is funded through a contract with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and additional funding from DMC Gosport. The apprentice training team comprises a training, development and apprentice manager, two apprentice training officers and an equality of opportunity adviser.
5. DMC Gosport recruits new learners every year in August, mainly from the local districts of Gosport and Fareham. In May 2005, the unemployment rate was 1.2 per cent in Gosport, less than 1 per cent in Fareham and 1 per cent in Hampshire, compared with a national unemployment rate of 2.3 per cent. At the time of the 2001 census, minority ethnic groups represented 1.7 per cent of the populations of both Gosport and Fareham and 5.3 per cent of the population of Portsmouth, compared with the national average of 9.1 per cent.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Grade 3

6. **The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory.** The leadership and management of training at DMC Gosport are satisfactory, as are arrangements for equality of opportunity and quality improvement. Provision is satisfactory in engineering, technology and manufacturing.

7. **The inspection team had some confidence in the reliability of the self-assessment process.** All of the grades in the self-assessment report match those given by inspectors. The report identifies most of the strengths and weaknesses in the area of learning, but not in leadership and management. The effect on learners of some of the strengths and weaknesses is not adequately explained. Some staff at DMC Gosport and Flagship are not sufficiently involved in the preparation of the self-assessment report. The development plan

DEFENCE MUNITIONS CENTRE GOSPORT

is thorough and has been used to identify further areas for improvement since the self-assessment report was written.

8. The provider has demonstrated that it has sufficient capacity to make improvements.

DMC Gosport has made some improvements since the previous inspection, and has taken effective action to maintain the quality of its training through good partnership working with a new subcontractor. Learners' individual learning plans and the integration of key skills training with the engineering training have improved and are now satisfactory. Retention and achievement rates have remained good. However, some weaknesses identified during the previous inspection have not been rectified, such as the inadequate involvement of workplace supervisors in the national vocational qualification (NVQ). Some areas of the provision have deteriorated, for example progress reviews and assessment practices. DMC Gosport relies too much on word-of-mouth feedback from learners and subcontractors to assess the quality of its provision.

KEY CHALLENGES FOR DEFENCE MUNITIONS CENTRE GOSPORT:

- maintain the good retention and achievement rates
- continue the strategic support for advanced apprenticeships
- involve workplace supervisors more in the management and monitoring of training
- increase recognition of learners' prior achievements and literacy and numeracy needs
- implement more effective arrangements for the monitoring of subcontractors
- use training resources more effectively

GRADES

grade 1 = outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = inadequate

Leadership and management		3
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		3

Engineering, technology & manufacturing			3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade	
Mechanical engineering			
Apprenticeships for young people	14	3	
Electrical engineering			
Apprenticeships for young people	10	3	

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

9. Two inspectors visited Defence Munitions Centre Gosport for four days to inspect the training in engineering and the organisation's approach to leadership and management.

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	8
Number of learners interviewed	23
Number of staff interviewed	6
Number of employers interviewed	7
Number of subcontractors interviewed	2
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	3
Number of visits	1

KEY FINDINGS

Achievements and standards

10. **Achievement and retention rates are good.** At the time of the previous inspection, the achievement rate for the advanced apprenticeship averaged 70 per cent. Achievement and retention rates for the three groups of learners scheduled to have completed their apprenticeship since then have risen, from 56 per cent for learners starting in 1999-2000 to 88 per cent for those starting in 2001-02. Of the 28 learners who have started their apprenticeship since 2002-03, 24 are still in training.

11. Learners produce a good range of technically complex work during their training at the main subcontractor. At DMC Gosport, they work alongside experienced and skilled workplace supervisors to gain a satisfactory understanding of how to assemble and disassemble weapons. Learners' work is closely monitored by their workplace supervisors. DMC Gosport places a strong emphasis on health and safety, and learners have a good awareness of safe working practices. However, the standard of some learners' written grammar and spelling is poor.

The quality of provision

12. **Resources for training at Flagship are very good.** The training centre is well equipped, with an excellent range of workshops and classrooms. Practical training resources in the spacious workshops are very good. The workshops are furnished with high-specification equipment and systems, and the well-equipped classrooms contain good resources for electronics, computing and computer-aided design. Training staff at Flagship are very knowledgeable and experienced.

13. **Learners carry out a good range of additional training** and achieve qualifications which exceed the minimum they need for their advanced apprenticeship. Many learners study for additional higher-level qualifications through day-release at Fareham College.

They are supported by DMC Gosport to finish many of these qualifications once they have completed their apprenticeship and become full-time employees. Learners are also encouraged to take part in relevant additional training during their work placements, which improves their chances of employment. Learners take part in two popular residential training events to develop their teamwork and management skills.

14. Assessment of learners' work is satisfactory. Assessments carried out at Flagship are thorough and include testing of learners' knowledge and understanding, observations of their performance, written work and examinations of the pieces of work produced. Staff at DMC Gosport assess learners in the workplace. Learners meet with their assessor frequently to discuss informally what evidence they need to collect towards the qualification. However, learners' literacy and numeracy skills are not accurately assessed when they start training to identify whether they have any additional support needs.

15. Workplace supervisors are not sufficiently involved in the NVQ and key skills training for learners. Apprentice masters at DMC Gosport are committed to the supervision of specialist training in their workshops, and to the wellbeing of their learners. However, they are content to leave the planning and assessment of the NVQ and key skills work to the training team. Their knowledge of the advanced apprenticeship qualification is poor.

16. Reviews of learners' progress carried out during work placements at DMC Gosport are weak. There are gaps of many months between the reviews, which are not used to monitor learners' progress against any explicit targets or to identify plans for further training. Workplace supervisors are not involved in the progress reviews, or in any discussion about how the practical training can be managed to meet the requirements of the NVQ and key skills qualifications. They are not sufficiently aware of learners' progress.

Leadership and management

17. Leadership and management at DMC Gosport are satisfactory. The organisation has maintained a satisfactory standard of training since the previous inspection, with good retention and achievement rates.

18. DMC Gosport provides good strategic support for employee development. Managers have a strong focus on maintaining the apprenticeship programme. They support the training, development and apprentice manager well by providing clear strategic direction and guidance in the planning and management of training. There is a commitment to recruit at least eight new learners a year. Partnership working with Flagship is good and the training programme is resourced well. The programme has a good reputation with other local training providers and is very popular. Learners' parents and guardians are involved fully in the recruitment process, which is carefully planned.

19. Learners have a good understanding and awareness of equality of opportunity. They have inductions at both DMC Gosport and Flagship in the first year of training, and a number of sessions cover equality of opportunity in detail. The organisation uses its monthly newsletter to remind staff constantly about their conduct and the procedures to follow if they are involved in, or see, instances of unacceptable behaviour. Managers take any concerns raised by learners seriously.

20. Communications between DMC Gosport and its subcontractors are good. Staff at

DMC Gosport meet regularly with Flagship's training personnel to discuss learners' progress and to share information about training. A learners' representative from the apprenticeship programme attends the board meetings. Staff also meet informally every week, and staff at Flagship value the good links they have with DMC Gosport.

21. The management of the training programme is satisfactory. Learners are expected to achieve high standards of performance and behaviour. The apprenticeship is clearly structured, but does not always provide staff with the flexibility to meet the specific needs of some learners who enrol with relevant prior experience or qualifications. DMC Gosport achieves a good balance between practical workshop activities and qualifications, which enables the learners to gain good background knowledge of engineering.

22. The management of resources is satisfactory. The training programme is resourced well, but the skills of the small training team are not always used effectively to ensure that actions are carried out promptly. Members of the training team have varying levels of experience and qualifications. Several workplace supervisors are training to be assessors, but their progress towards achieving the necessary qualification is slow.

23. DMC Gosport has taken some purposeful actions to improve the provision for learners since the previous inspection. It has decided to use Flagship for the first 15 months of the apprenticeship, improving the standards of training. Key skills qualifications are now integrated well with the NVQ, and learners' independent working skills have improved. However, some parts of the apprenticeship have deteriorated since the previous inspection, including progress reviews and assessment practices. The weakness in the involvement of workplace supervisors in NVQ and key skills training, which was identified at the previous inspection, has not been rectified.

24. **The strategy to identify and meet learners' additional literacy and numeracy skills support needs is inadequate.** DMC Gosport does not have a policy for additional support, and staff are not sure what to do if learners require additional help with the development of their literacy or numeracy skills. Staff do not use learners' literacy and numeracy results from their aptitude test or their grades for general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) in English and mathematics to assess what individual support they require. A number of learners achieve poor grades for their English and mathematics GCSEs and some learners have difficulty with spelling and grammar in their written work and other paperwork.

25. **DMC Gosport does not carry out sufficient monitoring of subcontractors to check the quality of training.** The organisation relies too much on informal feedback from learners and the subcontractors' staff, and does not have a framework for checking the quality of subcontractors' training. Subcontractors are not asked for any evidence of the activities they use to monitor the quality of their training. Some breaches of the contract between DMC Gosport and Flagship have gone unchecked for long periods of time. However, the effect of this weakness is lessened by the good standards of training at Flagship and the regular informal and formal communications which take place between it and DMC Gosport.

Leadership and management

Strengths

- good strategic support for employee development
- good understanding and awareness of equality by learners

Weaknesses

- inadequate strategy to identify and meet learners' additional literacy and numeracy support needs
- insufficient monitoring of subcontractors

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Strengths

- good achievement and retention rates
- very good training resources at the main subcontractor
- good range of additional training

Weaknesses

- insufficient involvement of workplace supervisors in NVQ and key skills training
- weak progress reviews

WHAT LEARNERS LIKE ABOUT DEFENCE MUNITIONS CENTRE GOSPORT:

- the canteen facilities
- working a half-day on a Friday
- the good pay and pension scheme
- the guidance and support from DMC Gosport's staff
- the hands-on practical work
- being accepted as a colleague in the workplace
- the approach of the training, development and apprentice manager
- the excellent training resources at the main subcontractor
- the range of additional qualifications
- the resource and initiative training

WHAT LEARNERS THINK DEFENCE MUNITIONS CENTRE GOSPORT COULD IMPROVE:

- the communications with it during the first year of training
- some of the work placements, where there is not enough to do
- the responsiveness to issues which are raised - 'things take a long time to happen'

DETAILED INSPECTION FINDINGS

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

Strengths

- good strategic support for employee development
- good understanding and awareness of equality by learners

Weaknesses

- inadequate strategy to identify and meet learners' additional literacy and numeracy support needs
- insufficient monitoring of subcontractors

26. DMC Gosport provides good strategic support for employee development. The organisation has demonstrated good management of change towards greater efficiency while continuing to meet the training needs of young people on the apprenticeship programme. Managers have a strong focus on planning for the future needs of the business and a determination to maintain the apprenticeship programme through a period of rationalisation. They support the training, development and apprentice manager well by providing clear strategic direction and guidance in the planning and management of training. There is a commitment to recruit at least eight new learners a year. The operations director chairs the apprentice board meetings and learners are fully involved in a number of important decision-making groups. DMC Gosport has provided a significant amount of funding for learners' training in their first year at Flagship. This training is better suited to the needs of the learners than that provided by the previous subcontractor. Learners adapt quickly to working in a military environment and to the standards of behaviour and discipline required. Partnership working with Flagship is good and the training programme is resourced well. Staff at DMC Gosport and Flagship hold the learners in high regard. The programme has a good reputation with other local training providers and is very popular. The number of applications to join the apprenticeship is significantly greater than the places available. Learners' parents and guardians are involved fully in the recruitment process, which is carefully planned.

27. Communications between DMC Gosport and its subcontractors are good. Staff at DMC Gosport meet regularly with Flagship's training personnel to discuss learners' progress and to share information about training. A learners' representative from the apprenticeship programme attends the board meetings. However, Flagship's staff have not attended a number of the most recent apprentice board meetings. Training is the main focus of all meetings, with minutes being produced and actions allocated. However, some actions are not followed up at subsequent meetings to ensure they have been carried out. Staff also meet informally every week and staff at Flagship value the good links they have with DMC Gosport. The training, development and apprentice manager has recently begun to hold regular meetings with staff at Fareham College to discuss the progress of learners studying for additional qualifications.

28. The management of the training programme is satisfactory. Learners are expected to achieve high standards of performance and behaviour. This is communicated clearly to them by staff at DMC Gosport and Flagship. The training programme is clearly structured,

but does not always provide staff with the flexibility to meet the specific needs of some learners who enrol with relevant prior experience or qualifications. There is some duplication of training by DMC Gosport and Flagship, for example during learners' induction in the first year. DMC Gosport achieves a good balance between practical workshop activities and qualifications, which enables the learners to gain good background knowledge of engineering. However, workplace supervisors are not sufficiently involved in the planning and assessment of the NVQ and key skills qualifications. Learners study a wide range of additional qualifications. They particularly enjoy the resource and initiative training, which is used effectively to collect evidence for their key skills qualifications. However, staff do not plan sufficiently for learners to gain key skills evidence through their workplace engineering training. Training staff at DMC Gosport are aware that some work placements in the second and third year of the apprenticeship have been discontinued due to business needs, while others do not have sufficient workload. They have introduced new work placements to resolve this problem effectively and to ensure that the learners continue to gain a wide range of electrical and mechanical engineering knowledge.

29. Staff appraisal and training are satisfactory. DMC Gosport has a comprehensive employee performance scheme. Annual appraisals for the training team are used to review past performance, set realistic individual targets and agree a learning plan for the next year. These are followed up at a six-monthly review. Staff are encouraged and supported to attend a wide range of training events in subjects such as health and safety, equality of opportunity and computing. However, frequent changes to the training team during the past year have made it difficult for members of staff to find the time to study for additional qualifications.

30. The management of resources is satisfactory. The training programme is resourced well, but the small training team is not always effectively deployed to ensure that actions are carried out as quickly as possible. Members of the training team have mixed levels of experience and qualifications. One of the apprentice training officers is not yet qualified to carry out assessments, and DMC Gosport does not have enough cover for the one assessor and one internal verifier in the event of their absence from work. Several workplace supervisors are training to be assessors, but their progress towards achieving the necessary qualification is slow. Resources for workplace training at Flagship are very good. At DMC Gosport, learners have access to an appropriate range of equipment for on-the-job training.

31. The strategy to identify and meet learners' additional literacy and numeracy skills support needs is inadequate. DMC Gosport has a disability statement but does not have a policy for additional support. Staff are not sure what to do if learners require additional help with the development of their literacy or numeracy skills. Staff do not use learners' literacy and numeracy results from their aptitude test or their GCSE English and mathematics grades to assess what individual support they require. DMC Gosport does not set any minimum qualifications for entry to the advanced apprenticeship and candidates are recruited before their GCSE results are published. However, a number of learners achieve poor grades for their English and mathematics GCSEs. Learners' literacy and numeracy skills are not assessed at the beginning of the four weeks of academic training at Flagship in their first year. All learners follow the same programme, which contains very little literacy training. Some learners do not use correct spelling and grammar in their written work and other paperwork. DMC Gosport does not assess whether some learners would benefit from achieving additional key skills qualifications at level 3. This weakness has been identified by the training, development and apprentice manager who

has incorporated it as an area of improvement in the organisation's most recent development plan. A new flowchart has been developed which includes the involvement of the local essential skills unit as part of the learners' induction.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

32. DMC Gosport has comprehensive policy statements about equality of opportunity at all levels of the organisation, accompanied by a detailed equality and diversity plan. The plan sets out the future actions necessary to support the policies, but has not been updated recently. Some of the timescales for the achievement of targets in the plan are insufficiently specific. DMC Gosport has a strong commitment towards equality of opportunity, and has appointed an equal opportunities adviser to support managers' intentions about the way staff in the workplace should treat each other. The recent reformation of the equal opportunities focus group has helped to raise the awareness of equality of opportunity among all staff in the organisation. A wide range of posters and leaflets is placed around the training centre to promote equality of opportunity. Although DMC Gosport does not monitor the implementation of subcontractors' detailed equal opportunities policies or procedures sufficiently, learners have a good understanding of what to do during the periods of training they spend away from the organisation.

33. Learners have a good understanding and awareness of equality of opportunity. All of the learners interviewed demonstrated a good understanding of what equality of opportunity means, why it is important, and what to do if they have any concerns related to themselves or others. Equality of opportunity is reinforced well at each stage of the apprenticeship, particularly in the first year of training. Learners have inductions at both DMC Gosport and Flagship, and a number of sessions cover equality of opportunity in detail. Learners are aware of the organisation's equality adviser and have a good relationship with her. DMC Gosport uses its monthly newsletter to remind staff constantly about their conduct and the procedures to follow if they are involved in, or see, instances of unacceptable behaviour. The learners' representative is democratically elected to the apprentice board by learners and has a good awareness and understanding of their needs. He represents them well at apprentice board meetings, and managers take seriously any concerns raised. For example, staff and the learners' representative demonstrated a sensitive approach and clear understanding of the matters involved when discussing the arrangements for a woman learner on the residential outdoor activities course. A learner in their first year at Flagship used his awareness of the correct procedures to report an incident involving the misuse of drugs by learners from another training provider. Two learners represent the apprenticeship programme on the organisation's equality of opportunity focus group. They have raised a number of points at group meetings, which have been resolved appropriately. The learners are assured of confidentiality where these issues are sensitive and involve other members of staff at the base.

34. Historical data shows that the recruitment of women and learners from minority ethnic groups is low. Equal opportunities data is collected and routinely analysed to identify the proportions of men and women and members of minority ethnic groups on programmes. New strategies have been developed to promote engineering to under-represented groups of learners. Marketing materials include pictures of women learners carrying out engineering activities. DMC Gosport has approached several local schools to promote engineering to girls, and is developing links with MoD bases in Portsmouth which have a higher proportion of staff from minority ethnic backgrounds. The equal opportunities adviser has started to develop partnerships with local organisations which represent the

interests of minority ethnic groups. However, no learners currently on programme identify themselves as belonging to a minority ethnic group, and only one is woman.

35. Not enough is done to cater for the different needs of individual learners. Some learners who need additional learning support have not received it. Progress reviews at DMC Gosport are weak, although reviews with learners at Flagship are used well to check learners' understanding of equality of opportunity and to discuss their behaviour and attitudes. There are insufficient arrangements for recognising prior learning, which discriminates against some learners. However, many of the learners value the opportunity to repeat learning they have already carried out as they judge the quality of the training to be much better than that which they received previously. Retention rates are good. Some learners with personal problems are supported well, but some disciplinary problems and other issues are not resolved appropriately.

36. Staff involved in the apprenticeship programme receive satisfactory training in equality of opportunity. The apprenticeship training team and a number of apprentice masters took part in a recent half-day training session on equality of opportunity, carried out by an external consultant. All staff have updated equality training every two years.

37. DMC Gosport has responded appropriately to the requirements of the Disability and Discrimination Act 1995. Teaching accommodation at its training centre is on the ground floor. Following a report carried out by an external consultant, the organisation has made a number of effective alterations to buildings and signage across the base. No current learners on the programme have a disability, although applications are encouraged from people with disabilities.

Quality improvement

Contributory grade 3

38. The quality improvement arrangements for the advanced apprenticeship are satisfactory. DMC Gosport operates a quality management system which meets with the requirements of ISO 9001, an international quality assurance standard. It also holds the Investors in People award, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. There is a strong emphasis on quality control and safety in the working environment because of the nature of the work. However, the organisation's quality assurance policy is insufficiently detailed. It does not identify clearly the responsibilities of DMC Gosport and its subcontractors.

39. Some purposeful actions have been taken to improve the provision for learners. The strategic decision to use Flagship as the main subcontractor for the first 15 months of the apprenticeship has led to an improvement in the standard of training. Key skills qualifications are now integrated well with the NVQ, and learners' independent working skills have improved. Individual learning plans, which were inadequate at the previous inspection, are now satisfactory. However, some parts of the apprenticeship training have deteriorated since the previous inspection, including progress reviews and assessment practices. The weakness in the involvement of workplace supervisors in NVQ and key skills training, which was identified at the previous inspection, has not been rectified.

40. The learners' representative uses verbal feedback collected from learners effectively to resolve problems at the apprentice board meeting. Where actions are identified at these meetings, the training, development and apprentice manager acts quickly to ensure they are carried out. However, learners become frustrated when other actions remain

unresolved for long periods of time.

41. DMC Gosport does not carry out sufficient monitoring of subcontractors to check the quality of training. It relies too much on informal feedback from learners and the subcontractors' staff and does not have a framework for checking the quality of subcontractors' training. The organisation has a detailed contract with Flagship, which clearly states the responsibilities of both parties for the day-to-day running of the programme, but does not have a service level agreement with Fareham College for learners studying additional qualifications. Subcontractors are not asked by staff at DMC Gosport for any evidence of their quality assurance activities, such as schemes of work, learning session plans, internal verification records, observation of training and attendance records. The frequent management meetings with subcontractors are used to monitor the performance of learners closely, but not to discuss the outcomes of quality assurance activities. Some breaches of the contract between DMC Gosport and Flagship have gone unchecked for long periods of time. For example, DMC Gosport did not receive copies of learners' progress reviews from Flagship for a period of nine months in 2004. Learners' written evaluations are not used effectively to collect meaningful feedback. The questionnaires are sometimes poorly worded, they are not anonymous, and they are issued and collected by the trainers or instructors on whom the learners are being asked to comment. Difficulties in the relationship with the former subcontractor, Highbury College, were identified by inspectors in the previous inspection report in 2001, but continued until the end of the 2002-03 academic year.

42. The effect of the insufficient monitoring of subcontractors on learners is lessened by the good standards of training at Flagship, and the regular formal and informal communications which take place between it and DMC Gosport. Internal verification arrangements are good at Flagship, although DMC Gosport does not fulfil all its contractual obligations as the accredited centre for the level 2 NVQ delivered at Flagship. Internal verification of the level 3 NVQ at DMC Gosport is satisfactory. Assessors and internal verifiers do not hold standardisation meetings to discuss assessment procedures or to share good practice. The training, development and apprentice manager has identified the weaknesses in DMC Gosport's monitoring of training at Fareham College and has carried out a number of actions to rectify the poor attendance by some learners and the late handing in of work for assessment.

43. The self-assessment process is satisfactory. It does not adequately involve some members of staff at DMC Gosport, particularly the workplace supervisors, or subcontractors. The grades given in the self-assessment report match those given by inspectors. Although the report identifies most of the strengths and weaknesses in the area of learning, it does not recognise a number of important strengths and weaknesses in leadership and management. The detailed development plan is reviewed at management meetings and staff have used it to identify a number of additional areas for improvement which were not included in the self-assessment report. Some actions have already started to resolve these additional weaknesses.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Engineering, technology & manufacturing

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Mechanical engineering Apprenticeships for young people	14	3
Electrical engineering Apprenticeships for young people	10	3

44. DMC offers advanced apprenticeships in mechanical and electrical engineering for young people. Twenty-four learners are currently enrolled on the training programme. The offer of an apprenticeship is based on the results of an aptitude test and an individual interview, but there are no minimum GCSE grades required to join the programme. Learners receive a formal induction at DMC Gosport and at the main subcontractor, Flagship, before they start workplace training for the first 15 months of the programme at Flagship. Prior to August 2003, this part of the training programme was carried out by Highbury College. During this period of training, learners work towards completing a level 2 NVQ in performing engineering operations, six key skills qualifications at level 2 and a technical certificate, usually a national certificate in engineering. Learners also develop skills required under the standards-based apprentice training scheme. All of these qualifications are assessed and internally verified by staff at Flagship. During all phases of training, learners receive resource and initiative residential training designed to promote teamwork and improve self-confidence.

45. On their return to DMC Gosport in the second year of the apprenticeship, learners are placed in different workshops, which are normally changed on a three-monthly basis. Learners are supervised and trained by craftsmen who are designated apprentice masters. Learners work towards completing a level 3 NVQ in mechanical manufacturing engineering and are assessed in the workplace by an apprentice training officer. Learners' performance is formally assessed by the appropriate apprentice master at the end of each period of workplace training. An external specialist is employed to carry out internal verification of this part of the training. Most learners also attend day-release courses at Fareham College, such as higher national certificates or diplomas in engineering.

Strengths

- good achievement and retention rates
- very good training resources at the main subcontractor
- good range of additional training

Weaknesses

- insufficient involvement of workplace supervisors in NVQ and key skills training
- weak progress reviews

Achievement and standards

46. As identified in the self-assessment report, achievement and retention rates are good.

At the time of the previous inspection, the achievement rate for the advanced apprenticeship averaged 70 per cent. Achievement and retention rates for the three intakes of learners scheduled to have completed their apprenticeship since the previous inspection have risen from 56 per cent for those starting in 1999-2000 to 88 per cent for those starting in 2001-02. Of the 28 learners who have started their programme since 2002-03, 24 are still in training. Learners currently in the third year of training did not complete the level 2 NVQ and key skills qualifications until recently, following problems experienced at the previous main subcontractor. However, those learners who carried out their first year of training with Flagship have all achieved the level 2 NVQ and are making good progress towards completing their key skills qualifications.

47. Learners produce a good range of technically complex work during their training at Flagship. At DMC Gosport, learners work alongside experienced and skilled workplace supervisors to acquire a satisfactory understanding of a wide range of assembly and disassembly techniques. They are given appropriate opportunities to develop their associated practical skills. Procedures to be used during servicing and maintenance of weapons are clearly explained, and learners' work is closely monitored by the apprentice masters. Standards of work in the munitions industry are expected to be good, and learners are required to perform to those standards as team members in their work placements. DMC Gosport places a strong emphasis on health and safety, instilling in learners a good awareness of safe working practices. However, the standard of some learners' written grammar and spelling is poor.

The following tables show 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		1999-00					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number of starts	8		10		10		8	100	9	100	9	100				
Retained*	0		0		0		8	100	7	78	5	56				
Successfully completed	0		0		0		7	88	7	78	5	56				
Still in learning	7		9		8		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

The quality of provision

48. Resources for workplace training at Flagship are very good. The training centre is equipped well with an excellent range of workshop and classroom facilities. Practical training resources in the workshops are very good. Workshops are furnished with high-specification equipment and systems. The spacious workshops are maintained well and have a good selection of training aids. The well-equipped classrooms contain good resources for electronics, computing and computer-aided design. Learners develop their experience of working with radar, sonar, radio and microwave equipment during their specialist standards-based apprentice training. Training staff and assessors at Flagship are very knowledgeable and experienced in their specialist engineering areas. They make good use of this experience when illustrating the technical features of engineering systems.

49. Learners receive a good range of additional training and achieve qualifications which exceed the minimum requirements of the apprenticeship programme. They achieve

several additional units to supplement the level 2 NVQ. Many learners progress from achieving a national certificate, which acts as the technical certificate in the first year of training, to study for other qualifications such as a higher national certificate in engineering through day-release at Fareham College. Learners are supported by DMC Gosport to finish many of these two-year qualifications once they have completed their apprenticeship. They are also encouraged to take part in relevant additional training during their time in work placements, for example in health and safety, fire awareness, computing, and electricity at work regulations. These training events give learners the opportunity to gain experience and qualifications in a range of occupational contexts, improving their employability. Learners take part in two popular residential training events. The first event at the beginning of the apprenticeship improves their teamwork and self-confidence, while the second event is used in their final year to develop their management skills. A number of learners have competed successfully in MoD national engineering hand-skills competitions.

50. Assessment practices are satisfactory. Learners are given a range of tasks to perform to develop their practical skills gradually during their level 2 NVQ workplace training at Flagship. Assessors carry out assessments during this training and give helpful feedback to learners. A final assessment of learners' competence is carried out on a relatively complex item of work. Learners' assessments are thorough and include testing of their knowledge and understanding, direct observation of their performance, written work and examinations of the pieces of work produced. However, learners' literacy and numeracy skills are not accurately assessed when they start training to identify whether they have any additional support needs. Staff at DMC Gosport assess learners on the level 3 NVQ in the workplace. Learners meet with the assessor frequently to discuss informally what evidence they need to collect towards the qualification. Learners write satisfactory technical descriptions of the work they carry out in each work placement, but most do not include any evaluation or endorsement by the relevant workplace supervisor. Insufficient assessment by direct observation is carried out. The involvement of the apprentice master and use of verbal questioning during some assessments leads to confusion about whether training or assessment is taking place. Learners have a good understanding of the assessment appeals procedure and the role of the internal verifier.

51. Individual learning plans were inadequate at the previous inspection. Recent improvements have been made, and plans are now satisfactory. The results of learners' initial assessments and the qualifications they are following are recorded appropriately. However, the plans are not always used adequately in progress reviews to record and plan individual training.

52. Workplace supervisors are not sufficiently involved in the NVQ and key skills training. This weakness was identified at the previous inspection and by DMC Gosport in its most recent self-assessment report. Apprentice masters are committed to the supervision of specialist training in their workshops to meet the standards-based apprentice training requirements, and to the wellbeing of their learners. However, they are content to leave the planning and assessment of the NVQ and key skills work to the apprentice training officers. Their knowledge of the apprenticeship framework is poor. None of the workplace supervisors is qualified to carry out assessments, although a number of them are making slow progress towards achieving the necessary qualifications.

53. Progress reviews carried out during work placements at DMC Gosport are weak. There are gaps of many months between progress reviews for learners. The reviews are

not used to monitor learners' progress against any explicit targets or to identify plans for further training. Some learners are unhappy with the work placements they are allocated, but do not have any formal opportunity to discuss this confidentially with the training team. Workplace supervisors are not involved in the progress reviews, or in any discussion about how the on-the-job training can be managed to meet the NVQ and key skills requirements. They are not sufficiently aware of learners' progress.

Leadership and management

54. The arrangements for the leadership and management of the engineering advanced apprenticeship programme are satisfactory. The training, development and apprentice manager controls all aspects of the training programme and has made a number of improvements following her recent appointment. She is supported well by senior managers at DMC Gosport. Communications and partnership working with the main subcontractor, Flagship, are good. Meetings are used well to discuss day-to-day operational issues affecting the training programme, but staff do not monitor the quality of training sufficiently, particularly at the subcontractors.

55. There are sufficient numbers of assessors and internal verifiers to support learners. However, the arrangements for staff cover in the event of the absence of the one assessor and the internal verifier are inadequate. This weakness has been identified by the provider, and several workplace supervisors are training to be assessors. However, their progress towards achieving assessor qualifications is slow. Insufficient focus is given to staff development to improve workplace supervisors' knowledge of the vocational programme, technical certificates and key skills qualifications. Internal verification carried out at Flagship for the level 2 NVQ is comprehensive and the internal verifier gives good feedback to assessors. However, the internal verification arrangements for the level 3 NVQ at DMC Gosport are insufficiently detailed. The quality of the written feedback given to assessors is not adequate enough to ensure that standards of assessment improve. These arrangements have been affected by the long-term absence of the internal verifier through serious illness.

