

Finmeccanica UK Limited

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' monitoring visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Engineering and manufacturing technologies

Description of the provider

1. Finmeccanica UK Limited (Finmeccanica) is a major industrial group of companies with headquarters in Italy. The group operates globally in the aerospace, defence and security sectors designing and manufacturing a large range of products including helicopters and electronic systems for military applications. The company employs over 74,000 people worldwide.
2. Since 2007, the National Employer Service of the Learning and Skills Council has funded Finmeccanica to provide apprenticeship training in two of its UK companies, AgustaWestland based in Yeovil and SELEX Galileo with sites in Basildon and Luton. Finmeccanica subcontracts to Xchanging, based in Preston, to manage learners' data relating to the funding operations and to provide management advice and guidance to SELEX Galileo and AgustaWestland. In addition, it provides some programme coordination, assessment and internal verification services to SELEX Galileo. Yeovil College, Prospects College, Bedford College, and Thurrock and Basildon College provide off-the-job training for the apprenticeship programme.
3. At the time of inspection, 152 advanced apprentices were following engineering programmes and 22 learners were working towards apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in business, administration and law. Of these, 113 engineering and 12 business learners were based at AgustaWestland and 39 engineering and 10 business learners were based at SELEX Galileo. The provision in business, administration and law was not inspected.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Outstanding: Grade 1
Quality of provision	Outstanding: Grade 1
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

Sector subject area

Engineering and manufacturing technologies	Outstanding: Grade 1
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is outstanding. Achievement and standards are outstanding. Success rates are very high. Learners make particularly good progress into employment and higher level qualifications and demonstrate very high levels of vocational and work related skills.
5. The quality of provision overall is outstanding. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Managers plan and closely monitor the standard of on- and off-the-job training particularly well. The development and assessment of learners' key skills qualifications is highly contextualised and relevant to learners' work. However, although assessment is satisfactory, assessors do not assess enough using direct observation. No systematic initial assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy and additional support needs takes place, but support arrangements are quickly put in place once support needs are identified. Arrangements to meet the needs and interests of learners, employers and the wider community are outstanding. Programmes closely align to learners work, and to business needs. Excellent enrichment activities promote good community engagement. Guidance and support arrangements are excellent. Well supported learners benefit from the substantial benefits of working for a large international company. Effective confidential support helps learners who experience personal or health related problems to achieve.
6. Leadership and management are good. Finmeccanica's good strategic planning of the apprenticeship programme ensures it meets future business needs. The management of subcontractors is highly effective. Very good communication between partners supports the good quality of the training provision. Quality improvement arrangements are comprehensive but relatively recent and aspects are incomplete.
7. Equality of opportunity is good. Good activities to widen participation effectively involve learners and actively target schools from deprived areas to raise pupils' aspirations about career choice.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

8. Since taking responsibility for the training contract, Finmeccanica has demonstrated a good capacity to improve. The overall strategy to improve and develop the service works very effectively. Finmeccanica makes good use of the views of learners and partners to plan and implement a range of improvement strategies. The provider has clear direction and commitment to developing and improving its provision. Learner success rates have improved to an outstanding level in all areas.

9. At the regular monthly quality management meetings, managers use data well to check the progress of learners. Well planned and effective programme developments include a range of additions and amendments to the training from which learners and employers clearly benefit. Changes and developments to off-the-job training, monitoring activities and the introduction of governance group meetings, are well planned. Staff work effectively to develop and implement quality improvement frameworks and strategies.
10. The self-assessment report accurately identifies many of the strengths and areas for improvement found by inspectors. It is detailed, thorough and evaluative and uses data well to support the judgements. Finmeccanica's approach to quality improvement is well planned and effectively monitored. The quality improvement plan clearly identifies the company's key strengths and areas for improvement. Senior managers actively monitor actions taken to improve the provision.

Key strengths

- Outstanding achievement and standards
- Particularly well planned and closely monitored training
- Outstanding programme meeting the needs of learners, employers and the wider community
- Excellent guidance and support
- Good strategic planning of the apprenticeship programme to meet business needs
- Highly effective management of subcontractors
- Very good communication between partners
- Good activities to widen participation

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient use of observation in assessment
- No systematic initial assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy and additional support needs
- Incomplete aspects of the quality improvement process

Main findings

Achievement and standards

Outstanding: Grade 1

11. Achievement and standards are outstanding and clearly reflected in the self-assessment report. Success rates are very high. In 2007/08 the success rate was 100% and in the current year is 95%. Most learners achieve high grades, including distinction, in their technical certificates and about 80% of technician apprentices achieve higher level qualifications, including in key skills, than required for their apprenticeship.
12. Learners' progression to employment and higher level qualifications is particularly good. In the past two years, 10 learners progressed to a higher national diploma and 10 were sponsored on university courses. The company offers all learners employment on completion of their apprenticeship and many reach senior roles. There is no significant difference in the performance of different groups.
13. Learners gain and demonstrate very high levels of vocational and work related skills. First year off-the-job training for learners is good and for AgustaWestland learners, is closely aligned to their work. During on-the-job training, learners quickly develop high level skills and work competently on company projects. They make a significant contribution to these projects working to the very high standards required for operational aircraft and complex defence systems. Learners demonstrate high levels of confidence and good communication skills. They communicate well at all levels and take responsibility for their own learning, arranging meetings with support staff and managers and monitoring their own progress. They actively seek out work required to meet the requirements of their apprenticeship and contribute effectively to their own career planning.

Quality of provision

Outstanding: Grade 1

14. The quality of provision is outstanding. The quality of teaching and learning is good. This was recognised in the self-assessment report. The standard of on- and off-the-job training is particularly well planned and closely monitored. Off-the-job training, closely aligned to business needs, equips learners well for their work-placements. Learners experience a wide variety of work throughout their apprenticeship gaining extensive knowledge in the design, production and maintenance of rotary wing aircraft and advanced defence systems. They also complete training in computer aided design and management systems as appropriate to their role. Supervisors coach learners effectively to impart skills and knowledge as they work together. Each supervisor takes responsibility to check and sign for learners' work, and providing constructive feedback on their performance. A wide range of employability training includes presentation techniques, communications, telephone techniques, time management, assertiveness and team working. Learners apply these skills well throughout their apprenticeship.

15. Managers carefully plan and monitor on-the-job training. They link the requirements of the qualifications to opportunities in each work area and use this to plan training effectively. Flexible planning allows learners to influence the type of work activities they carry out to meet their personal aspirations. Learners agree clear objectives and work tasks linked to their national vocational qualification during each work-placement. Managers throughout AgustaWestland have a clear understanding of the requirements of the apprenticeship and how they can contribute to learners' progress. However, supervisors in SELEX Galileo are less well informed. Training officers closely monitor the progress of each learner during regular review meetings, but the targets agreed at some sites are not always clearly stated or measurable. Managers, regular review of learners' progress at the end of each work-placement contributes effectively to learners' progress reviews. Learners are well aware of the progress expected of them. Their annual targets are clearly linked to progression and the annual pay rise.
16. The development and assessment of learners' key skills qualifications is highly contextualised and particularly relevant to learners' work. Key skills are developed and assessed throughout the apprenticeship and relate directly to the work of the company and the projects learners work on.
17. Assessment is satisfactory. The 45 qualified and 12 trainee assessors are independent of the learners' supervisors and provide effective assessment of learners work. However, assessors do not use observation sufficiently as an assessment method.
18. No systematic initial assessment of learners' literacy, numeracy and additional support needs takes place. The company has a range of relevant information about learners when they start but does not systematically use this to help identify learners who may have additional support needs. For example, the company did not identify that one learner had dyslexia until the subcontracted college identified it during the first year training programme. Once identified, the company and college quickly put appropriate measures in place to support this learner.
19. Arrangements to meet the needs and interests of learners, employers and the wider community are outstanding. Programmes are closely aligned to business needs and include a range of additional elements relevant to both the company and the industry. Very well planned programmes ensure that learners experience all aspects of the company's work. Learners are encouraged to, and do, influence their own training plan. Finmeccanica provides excellent enrichment activities and engages well with the community. Learners play a crucial role in links with schools and charities. For example, they take responsibility for assisting year 10 pupils on work experience and guiding A level students on placements and tours. An initiative where learners help to design robots, which played football, was particularly successful in engaging schools in Luton and Basildon. All learners participate in team building exercises to improve confidence and there are significant social and sporting activities.
20. Guidance and support arrangements are excellent. The well supported learners benefit from the substantial benefits of working for a large international company.

Learners are well informed about the opportunities within the industry and the job opportunities within Finmeccanica. Training staff and managers provide good personal and academic support. Supervisors and engineers are readily available and provide good quality technical support and guidance. Trained advisers give helpful guidance to learners who are experiencing difficulty with personal, welfare or other academic aspects of their programme. Finmeccanica has particularly good arrangements to ensure the welfare and safety of learners. Their extensive range of services includes an occupational health centre, physiotherapist, counsellors, and support through a range of external agencies. Effective confidential support helps learners who experience personal or health related issues to achieve. For example, after a thorough risk assessment, an apprentice who experienced a neurological illness had his training adapted for a new job role. Staff managed the change sensitively with frequent communication between occupational health staff, the learner and his parents.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

21. Leadership and management are good. Finmeccanica's good strategic planning of the apprenticeship programme ensures it meets future business needs. The comprehensive range of information considered for planning purposes includes the projected and guaranteed work schedule for the next four years and the current workforce age profile. Use of the apprenticeship programme for succession planning ensures both the learners and the organisation have a clear direction and aim for the duration of their training. Key staff attend high profile external specialist industrial groups to help inform the strategic planning process by identifying the latest technological and qualification developments.
22. The management of subcontractors is highly effective. Comprehensive service level agreements are in place and clearly identify responsibilities. Regular monitoring of subcontractor activities takes place both formally and informally. Very productive meetings take place between senior management of both parties to raise learner complaints, course content, attendance and any other issues. Close monitoring supports programme improvements. In some cases, the company changed its subcontractor. Subcontractors' teaching and learning observation processes are regularly used to check the quality of classroom and workshop sessions.
23. Very good communication between partners supports the quality of the training provision. A highly effective range of meetings support programme delivery with quarterly governance meetings, monthly quality meetings and regular informal communication between key personnel in the training programme. Cross site forums are in place and a range of apprenticeship information is produced. Excellent company intranets hold systems and procedures accessible to learners which include training opportunities, information on safeguarding, equality and diversity and appraisal and development.

24. Staff appraisal and development processes are satisfactory. Annual appraisal leads to effective staff targets being set. Targets are regularly reviewed and revised and staff development opportunities are identified. All staff are suitably qualified and staff development is well supported by the organisation. Use of management information is satisfactory. Managers monitor learners' progress well and maintain a detailed computerised record of progress and achievement.
25. Quality improvement is a key focus for Finmeccanica and is underpinned by the three year quality improvement strategy and the annual quality calendar. The quality improvement group closely monitors each stage of the quality cycle. Although comprehensive, it is relatively recent and some aspects are not yet fully functional. Learner views are not sought regularly. Although standardisation meetings for assessors and internal verifiers take place, they are not part of the annual quality cycle and not held across the Finmeccanica group.
26. Self-assessment is central to the quality improvement of the training programme. It is an agenda item at all partnership meetings. The draft report is circulated to key staff for consultation. Self-assessment forms the basis for the quality improvement plan, which the quality improvement group regularly reviews and updates. However, although the views of key people within the training programme teams are sought, the process is not fully inclusive. Employees and learner views are not sought to influence the process. Inspectors found the self-assessment evaluative and accurate in its judgements.
27. Equality of opportunity is good. Activities to widen participation, through the effective involvement of learners, are good. School events take a high priority for activities that include the promotion of science, technology, engineering and mathematics and the company as an employer of choice. The company actively targets schools from deprived areas to raise pupils' aspirations about career choice. The number of learners recruited from underrepresented groups, such as young women, shows a slowly improving trend. Leadership activities, aimed at school teachers, develop their understanding of engineering. Apprentices are actively involved in career fairs, open evenings and industry days.
28. The induction process provides good opportunities to develop learners' knowledge and understanding of the legislation covering the employment acts, discrimination, bullying and harassment. Reviewers regularly question learners on their knowledge of equality of opportunity during reviews, but do not use this opportunity to reinforce their understanding. Managers very actively remove inappropriate imagery on display in some AgustaWestland workshops.
29. The arrangements for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. The provider has a well written range of policies for dignity and respect at work, equality of opportunity, the management of young persons at work and child protection and development. Staff directly involved with the training of young people, and learners involved in school projects and careers events are vetted. All learners, as a requirement of the defence industry, are security vetted. At AgustaWestland a designated member of staff is responsible for safeguarding.

What learners like:

- The whole experience
- The variety of work and the wide range of opportunities
- The very good peer support and social life
- Helping in the community, particularly with schools
- Support from engineers with technical aspects of the job
- The opportunity to progress within the company and to university
- Understanding how the whole company works
- The chance to earn, work and study together

What learners think could improve:

- The availability of a hands-on workshop placement for technicians
- Clearer guidance on how to use university facilities including the library