

DSDA Gosport

Inspection report

Unique reference number: 51510

Name of lead inspector: Joy Montgomery HMI

Last day of inspection: 18 September 2009

Type of provider: Employer

Address: DSDA Gosport
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Information about the provider

1. Defence Storage and Distribution Agency Gosport (DSDA) is a Ministry of Defence (MOD) establishment. The agency forms part of Defence Equipment and Support. The primary functions of DSDA are the maintenance, processing, storage and distribution of ammunition and sophisticated weapons. The number of apprentices recruited each year has reduced from 10 in 2003 to six each year since 2006.
2. DSDA contracts with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide advanced apprenticeships in mechanical and electrical engineering. The programme lasts between 32 and 42 months. The first phase of apprentices' training is full-time at Fareham College. The second and third phases of training are on-site in DSDA's workshops or at HMS Sultan in Portsmouth. Three DSDA staff work full-time with apprentices. On-site training and assessments are carried out by apprentice masters who are all employees at DSDA.
3. Unemployment in Gosport in July 2009 was 3.1% compared with 4.1% nationally. The proportion of school leavers gaining five or more general certificates of education (GCSE) at grade C and above, including mathematics and English, in Gosport in 2008 was 45.6%, compared with 47.3% in England.
4. The following organisation provides training on behalf of DSDA:
 - Fareham College (engineering)

| Type of provision | Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09 |
|--|--|
| Employer provision: Apprenticeships | 18 apprentices |

Summary report

Grades: 1 is outstanding; 2 is good; 3 is satisfactory; 4 is inadequate

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| Overall effectiveness of provision | Grade 3 |
| Capacity to improve | Grade 3 |
| | Grade |
| Outcomes for learners | 2 |
| Quality of provision | 2 |
| Leadership and management | 3 |
| Safeguarding | 3 |
| Equality and diversity | 2 |
| Subject areas | Grade |
| Engineering | 2 |

Overall effectiveness

- The overall effectiveness of DSDA's provision is satisfactory. Most apprentices who start the programme successfully achieve many qualifications. They learn a wide range of engineering skills including specialist skills in the maintenance of munitions. At the end of the programme many apprentices are employed at DSDA or another MOD site. The quality of the engineering training is good and meets everyone's needs. Apprentices are not always aware of what they need to learn when they are in a work placement. Some apprentices are unsure when they will be assessed at work. Apprentices say they feel safe and well supported. The formal arrangements to safeguard apprentices are satisfactory. Managers set high standards for apprentices to achieve. However, they do not always ensure that changes planned to improve the programme are completed within the time expected.

Main findings

- Apprentices gain high levels of confidence and improve social skills through a very enjoyable outdoor team building course. The team bonding is exceptionally good and apprentices support each other very well throughout the programme.
- Apprentices develop high standards of practical skills and specialist knowledge. This prepares them very well for employment.

- DSDA sets high standards and expectations. Apprentices win prizes and awards in national competitions and achieve a wide range of additional qualifications.
- Last year all apprentices successfully completed the apprenticeship programme. However, the wider key skills were completed at a very late stage.
- Training in DSDA's workshops is good. Highly skilled and experienced apprentice masters are keen to share their knowledge and skills. However, no specific objectives are set for each work placement.
- Apprentices feel well supported. They are confident that any issues will be dealt with quickly by staff.
- Female apprentices are just as successful as male apprentices.
- Apprentices have many opportunities to feedback throughout their programme. Their views are used to improve the programme. An apprentice representative attends quarterly meetings with managers and trainers.
- Workplace assessments are generally well planned; however there have been delays in arranging assessment in the workshops.
- Apprentices feel safe and demonstrate good working practices. Arrangements for safeguarding are satisfactory.
- Actions planned to maintain high standards and improve the programme are not systematically followed up to ensure they are effective and completed on time.

What does DSDA need to do to improve further?

- Ensure there are sufficient staff to manage and deliver all aspects of the apprenticeship programme.
- Further develop and implement procedures to meet the new vetting and barring requirements.
- Agree with the college arrangements to ensure apprentices complete all key skills during phase 1.
- Improve target setting on actions and planned improvements. Monitor actions more closely to ensure they are effective and completed.
- Make better use of standardisation meetings to improve the quality and consistency of assessments and verification.
- Set clear learning objective for apprentices' skills development during their work placements. Agree these objectives with the apprentices and their supervisors.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- being selected for an apprenticeship scheme
- learning a lot in a relatively short time
- the apprentice masters as they are good trainers
- gaining lots of qualifications

- feeling safe and being well looked after
- being at work and feeling proud to be part of DSDA.

What learners would like to see improved:

- to do something practically based on site in the first year
- nothing.

Summary of the views of employers as confirmed by inspectors

What managers like:

- that the apprentices provide vital replacements for the aging workforce
- the programme provides the specialist skills not found in general engineering craftsmen
- that the apprentices develop good communication skills and work well with other employees in small teams.

What managers would like to see improved:

- information on how well apprentices have performed in other work placements and if they need help
- more electrical engineers rather than just mechanical engineers.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 3

6. DSDA has maintained high success rates which are consistently above national averages since the last inspection. Satisfactory progress is being made in improving the quality of provision. The quality of progress reviews between apprentices, the college and the training officer have improved significantly. However progress reviews in the workplace still lack sufficient involvement of apprentice masters.
7. The self assessment process makes good use of apprentices' and managers' views. The self-assessment report does not record all the areas that need to be improved although these are known to the training officer. Plans are in place to improve the weaknesses but implementation is slow. Throughout 2009 the position of apprentice / training centre manager has been vacant. Three apprentice masters are working towards their assessor qualifications to take over the work of the training officer who retired earlier in the year.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 2

8. Apprentices' attainment of their learning goals is outstanding. In 2009 all apprentices successfully completed the programme. The success rate dropped from 87% in 2007 to 75% in 2008 as two apprentices resigned from DSDA. All apprentices gain additional qualifications and many gain qualifications at a level higher than that required by the apprenticeship. Different groups of apprentices achieve equally well.
9. A highly effective outdoors team building course at the start of the programme greatly increases apprentices' confidence and social skills. Apprentices thoroughly enjoy the experience and are challenged to extend their capabilities beyond personal boundaries. The team bonding is exceptional and this mutual support continues throughout the programme. The strong team working skills are highly valued by the business unit managers.
10. Apprentices who progress quickly and complete their National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 2 early are encouraged to develop higher standards of work and compete in regional and national engineering competitions. DSDA apprentices have won several prizes and awards in the last two years. However progress in achieving key skills has been poorly managed. Wider key skills are completed late in the programme and insufficient use is made of evidence that occurs naturally during the first phase of the programme.
11. Development of practical workplace skills and knowledge is excellent. Apprentices thoroughly enjoy the training in different work placements. They are quick to learn and make good progress. Apprentices successfully complete additional qualifications and courses to meet the needs of the business. Most ex-apprentices who completed during the last four years are still employed at

DSDA or other MOD sites. Many ex-apprentices are now apprentice masters providing training and support to current apprentices.

12. DSDA places a particularly strong emphasis on health, safety and security. Apprentices are very safety conscious and demonstrate good awareness of the potential hazards in the working environment. Apprentices have a good sense of well being. They feel safe and well looked after by staff at college and in the workplace. They are confident staff will address any concerns they have.

The quality of provision

Grade 2

13. Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. A wide range of relevant courses are provided by the college during the first phase of training. Apprentices learn additional skills to meet the requirements of the MOD standard based apprentice training. They receive appropriate help with literacy, numeracy and language when required.
14. Training in the workplace is good. Apprentices spend four month blocks in a wide variety of workshops and processing environments. They develop good knowledge and skills working alongside highly skilled and experienced apprentice masters. However, no specific aims and objectives are set for apprentices when they start each work placement. Learning is based on practical tasks that are dependent on the work available at the time. Learning is insufficiently well-planned to develop individual skills or to ensure apprentices cover specific knowledge relating to the qualification.
15. The quality of assessments is inconsistent. Some assessor reports are not sufficiently individualised to ensure apprentices clearly understand how they can improve and what they need to do to achieve the qualification. Generally, workplace assessments are well planned and provide apprentices with good feedback. However there has been a delay in arranging some workplace assessments. Internal verification records are insufficiently detailed.
16. Apprentices receive good constructive feedback during their regular progress reviews with the college and the training officer. Clear and challenging targets ensure apprentices make good progress towards achieving their learning goals. Reviews of progress during work placements are less useful. The grading of apprentices' competencies by apprentice masters varies considerably and is not standardised. Areas for development are not routinely shared with each placement.
17. Provision meets the needs and interests of apprentices and managers at DSDA very well. Where possible, work placements are matched to the interests of apprentices and the potential for securing permanent employment at the end of the programme. The wide range of training courses ensures apprentices learn the specialist skills and knowledge needed for working with weapons and explosives. Higher level qualifications are available to apprentices with prior achievements.

18. The partnership between DSDA and the college is good. Communications have improved and regular meetings take place. DSDA now has access to the college's system to monitor apprentices' attendance and achievements. DSDA has well established working relationships with local schools. Parents and partners of apprentices are invited to an annual event to mark the start and completion of each group.
19. Support for apprentices is good. Recruitment and induction are well-structured and thorough. Apprentices are well aware of their responsibilities and the fact they are representing DSDA when attending college. Apprentices feel very well supported and know who they can contact should they need support. A good range of support services are available at college and on site.

Leadership and management

Grade 3

20. Leaders and managers fully support and promote the apprenticeship programme. They recognise the importance of developing young people with specialist skills who can replace an aging workforce. DSDA sets high standards for apprentices and encourages them to achieve excellence. Apprentices are supported to compete and succeed in regional and national competitions. Each group is keen to do as well, if not better than the previous groups.
21. Arrangements for safeguarding young people are satisfactory. A recently developed safeguarding policy sets out clear roles and responsibilities. Contact details for apprentices' parents are maintained. Managers and training staff have received basic awareness training on child protection issues. Additional training is planned for apprentice masters. Higher level training is planned for designated staff. Risk assessments, including the subcontractor's, effectively cover health and safety. However, insufficient formal checks are carried out of the subcontractor's safeguarding arrangements and equality and diversity procedures. Procedures are in place to meet the requirements of the new vetting and barring scheme. All employees are checked by the defence vetting agency.
22. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Equality and diversity policies and procedures are carefully explained at the start of the programme. Bullying and harassment are not tolerated. The complaints procedure is clear and well understood although there is little evidence to show that it is used. All employees are given training in equality and diversity at least every three years.
23. DSDA recruits just six apprentices each year and carefully monitors the diversity of applicants and starts. Over the last few years, more female applicants have applied and the learner profile reflects sector averages for engineering. One female started the programme in August 2009. Another female ex-apprentice is still employed by DSDA. The number of learners from minority ethnic groups is representative of the population. The starting age of apprentices varies from 16 to 22. Some start with low levels of prior attainment. There is no difference in the performance or learning outcomes of different groups.

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24. Apprentices are fully involved in reviewing the effectiveness of the programme. An elected third phase apprentice attends and contributes to the quarterly apprentice board meetings. All apprentices complete evaluation forms every six months. Satisfaction levels are high although no analysis has been carried out to review any trends over time. Apprentice masters share their views during six-monthly workshops. However attendance by some is poor. The college provides informal feedback during the regular review meetings.
25. DSDA makes satisfactory use of self assessment to improve its provision. The process makes good use of apprentices and business unit managers' views. Basic data on each cohort is used to review retention and achievement rates. Monitoring of the quality of teaching, learning and assessments is not consistent or systematic. The development plan is not routinely reviewed or updated. Other improvements are planned as part of the apprentice master workshops, the equality and diversity action plan and apprentice board meeting. However the implementation of actions is often slow and it is difficult to check when actions were completed or how effective they were.
26. The quality and availability of resources at the college and on site are satisfactory. Apprentices have access to good quality learning materials, equipment and facilities. However, the apprentice training team is currently under staffed. The position of apprentice / training centre manager has been vacant for all of 2009. New part-time workplace assessors are still in training.

Information about the inspection

27. One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one additional inspector, assisted by the provider's Apprentice Training Officer as nominee, carried out the inspection. Inspectors also took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, comments from the local LSC, the previous inspection report, reports from the inspectorate's quality monitoring inspection, and data on learners and their achievement over the period since the previous inspection.
28. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and emails. They looked at questionnaires learners and managers had recently completed. They also observed learners' work and learning sessions and reviewed assessment and progress review documents.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

DSDA Gosport

Learning types: 14 – 16: Young apprenticeships; Diplomas; 16-18 Learner responsive: FE full- and part-time courses, Foundation learning tier, including Entry to Employment; 19+ responsive: FE full- and part-time courses; Employer responsive: Train to Gain, apprenticeships

| Grades using the 4 point scale 1: Outstanding; 2: Good; 3: Satisfactory; 4: Inadequate | Overall | 14-16 | 16-18 Learner responsive | 19+ Learner responsive | Employer responsive |
|--|---------|-------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Approximate number of enrolled learners | | | | | |
| Full-time learners | | | | | 18 |
| Part-time learners | | | | | |
| Overall effectiveness | 3 | | | | 3 |
| Capacity to improve | 3 | | | | |
| Outcomes for learners | 2 | | | | 2 |
| How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning? | 2 | | | | |
| How well do learners attain their learning goals? | 1 | | | | |
| How well do learners progress? | 2 | | | | |
| How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development? | 1 | | | | |
| How safe do learners feel? | 2 | | | | |
| <i>Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*</i> | | | | | |
| <i>How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*</i> | | | | | |
| Quality of provision | 2 | | | | 2 |
| How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development? | 3 | | | | |
| How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users? | 2 | | | | |
| How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners? | 2 | | | | |
| How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve? | 2 | | | | |
| Leadership and management | 3 | | | | 3 |
| How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation? | 3 | | | | |
| <i>How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*</i> | | | | | |
| How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners? | 3 | | | | |
| How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap? | 2 | | | | |
| How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvement? | 2 | | | | |
| How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners? | 3 | | | | |
| How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money? | 3 | | | | |

*where applicable to the type of provision

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