

Ministry of Defence – Army

Focused monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 54805

Name of lead inspector: Martin Hughes HMI

Last day of inspection: 12 November 2009

Type of provider: Independent learning provider

Address: HQ DETS (A)
Trenchard Lines
Upavon
Wiltshire SN9 6BE

Telephone number: 01980 618725

FOCUSED MONITORING VISIT: MAIN FINDINGS

Context and focus of visit

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) Army Apprenticeship Scheme (AAS), formally Army Work-based learning (AAS) is managed strategically by the Directorate of Educational and Training Services (Army) DETS(A) and operationally by individual Arms and Service Directors (A&SDs). The AAS offers a broad range of provision, primarily in the United Kingdom (UK), Germany and Canada, including public services, agriculture, engineering, information and communication technology (ICT), retail and commercial enterprise, construction, business administration and learning and development. Learners are soldiers employed by the MoD. The provision is contracted with the LSC's National Employment Service and started in 2007/08. This funding represents less than 1% of the Army's training budget.

At the inspection in March 2009, inspectors found the overall effectiveness of the provision to be satisfactory. The capacity to improve and achievement and standards were good; quality of provision, leadership and management and equality of opportunity were satisfactory. In the subject areas, one was graded outstanding, two good and two satisfactory. Within the health and public services, the security provision was graded inadequate. At the time of the previous inspection, 12,330 learners were on trade related apprenticeship programmes, and 1,005 were on Train to Gain National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). This report focuses on the themes explored during the visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

How is the self-assessment and post-inspection action plan/improvement plan developing to drive improvements?	Reasonable progress
---	---------------------

AAS has made reasonable progress in developing the self-assessment and the improvement planning process to drive and sustain improvements since the last inspection. Some very positive actions were quickly taken after inspection to focus senior staff in the A&SDs on making improvements. Purposeful training has improved use of data as an effective tool to drive quality improvement and to support self-assessment. Specialist training has helped establish global targets to focus the analysis of data collected on individual programme performance. Learner views are effectively gathered and used well to influence development planning.

A very effective and well-managed quality improvement action plan provides clear direction to staff at all levels. It also has helped in the update and revision of subject area self-assessments by the A&SDs. A comprehensive moderation and evaluation process has just begun to evaluate the effectiveness and detail of the individual self-assessments, providing good feedback.

Outcomes for learners

What improvements have been made in the overall outcomes for learners? Significant progress

Outcomes for learners in the security provision have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Both overall and timely success rates for apprenticeships have risen considerably. At the previous inspection, the 2007/08 overall success rates for apprenticeships in security was 49%, with a timely success rate of 47%. In 2008/09, the overall security apprenticeships success rate to period 12 was 79%, and the timely success rate was 58% for the same period. The timely success rate for Train to Gain security provision remains good, as identified at the previous inspection, and rose very slightly from 80% in 2007/08 to 81% in 2008/09. Measures to monitor attendance at training have improved, as have processes to report poor attendance to local managers. Across all apprenticeships, attendance is now in excess of 70% for all elements of framework training, including key skills. Monitoring and timely delivery of reviews has improved across all provision, with around 7% of reviews now overdue, though this figure is reducing rapidly. The number of learners who remain on programme beyond their planned end date has reduced significantly to around 3% of security apprentices. Currently around 35% of learners have their training suspended because of operational deployments.

What progress has been made in monitoring and setting of targets to improve the learner review process? Reasonable progress

Following the previous inspection, the provider has made reasonable progress in improving the learner target-setting and review process. A wide range of review instruments was comprehensively trialled across a four-month period. Appropriate use was made of learner and training provider feedback to improve the design of new procedures and instruments. A clear and useful handbook is now in place to guide reviewers, and Arms and Service Directors, with helpful guidance on the ways to collect and record evidence of learners' progress. Instructions for target setting are now clearer, and all aspects of the review process have greater relevance to learners' operational and career-development needs. Appropriate measures have been built into the provider's quality improvement plan to evaluate the success of the new process and its effectiveness in improving rates of progress and learner motivation.

How has the sharing and management of continuing professional development improved provision? Reasonable progress

Reasonable progress has been made in professional development and sharing good practice. A clear plan for the effective delivery of continuing development for all A&SDs is now in place and working well. Regular training is now being delivered for all designated officers and A&SDs to help them understand the Common Inspection Framework, self-assessment and quality improvement processes while also providing a perspective on the value of external inspection. A&SDs have detailed training to help them manage and analyse the work of their training providers. The recent

introduction and effective use of performance measures in the monthly meetings across all the provision has had a significant impact in improving the quality and outcomes of the provision. A&SDs are now equipped with the tools to analyse and evaluate learner performance. Support is available through the thoroughly embedded team of four quality mentors, who can now look globally at the provision and not focus on managing individual subject areas. An internet-based programme provides easy access to management information and examples of good practice to all managers.

How have the quality improvement process impacted on monitoring teaching and learning? Reasonable progress

Reasonable progress has been made in the development of an observation of teaching and learning process; however, it is still an area recognised as requiring more work. An appropriate framework has been established with a set of operating procedures, providing the direction for quality management that will work across all A&SDs delivery areas. A process for recording observations is still being developed and agreed to ensure it covers the range of teaching and training delivery.

The training delivered to A&SDs staff has been influential in helping them understand the importance of having full oversight of the delivery of training both from the training provider and the military instructors.

Extensive work is being undertaken to ensure military instructors receive external recognition of their qualifications, bringing together the military approach to the analysis of training and an observation of teaching and learning performance.

What progress has been made to ensure greater participation and 'buy in' from senior staff across the provision? Reasonable progress

The provider has taken reasonable steps to improve senior staff awareness and involvement in apprenticeship provision. Commanding officer group (COG) and Maxi COG monthly and quarterly meetings now have a clearer focus on reviews of training quality and effectiveness, and on sharing of good practice. All infantry commanding officers now receive a clear and comprehensive guide to apprenticeship and other vocational training opportunities offered through Army. The guide includes a supportive introduction to training from the Director of the Infantry. Management information systems now produce data on learner numbers and training uptake by the battalions, which is reviewed among Commanding Officers and at senior levels in the infantry. The Director General Army Recruiting and Training is now the apprenticeship ambassador providing significant, top down influence on developing and enhancing the awareness of the apprenticeship programmes across the Army at all levels.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this report in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404040, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester, M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009