

BAE Systems PLC

Inspection report

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Name of lead inspector: Phil Romain HMI

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Type of provider: Employer

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Information about the provider

1. BAE Systems (BAES) is a global defence company employing approximately 107,000 personnel worldwide, with 38,000 of those based in the UK. The company delivers a wide range of products and services for air, land and naval forces as well as advanced electronics, security, information technology solutions and customer support services. BAES operates through a number of discrete business units, each responsible for its own recruitment of apprentices. BAES holds contracts with English and Scottish funding bodies for the delivery of apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships. The programmes in England are delivered across the three business units of Military Air Solutions (MAS), Submarine Solutions (Subs) and Platform Solutions (PS).
2. At the time of inspection 17 apprentices and 583 advanced apprentices were following engineering programmes and 23 advanced apprentices were following business administration programmes. The provision in business administration was not inspected. Approximately 50% of learners work in Barrow and most of the remainder are employed in business units in the Preston and Brough area. Fifty-one engineering apprentices are women.
3. BAES subcontracts to Xchanging, based in Preston, to manage and quality assure apprentice training. In addition, it provides programme coordination, assessment and internal verification services for MAS and Subs, and programme coordination and assessment for PS. Internal verification and engineering assessment for PS are subcontracted to Direct Training Solutions Ltd, based in Penrith. BAES subcontracts first year off-the-job training to Xchanging for MAS apprentices, to IPS International for PS apprentices and to Furness College for Subs apprentices. Other aspects of off-the-job training are subcontracted to local FE colleges and to Longridge Teaching Centre in Preston.
4. In January 2010 BAES started a new programme in Aircraft Maintenance Services based in Doncaster. At present there are 44 learners on this programme. BAES also has 238 apprentices in Scotland.
5. The following organisations provide training on behalf of BAES:
 - Xchanging
 - Furness College
 - Hull College
 - East Riding College
 - Runshaw College
 - Mid Kent College
 - IPS International
 - Direct Training Solutions
 - Longridge Teaching Centre

Type of provision	Number of enrolled learners in 2008/09
Employer provision: Apprenticeships	630 apprentices

Summary report

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

Overall effectiveness of provision	Grade 1
Capacity to improve	Grade 2
	Grade
Outcomes for learners	1
Quality of provision	1
Leadership and management	2
Safeguarding	1
Equality and diversity	2
Subject Areas	Grade
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	1

Overall effectiveness

6. The overall effectiveness of BAES's apprenticeship programme is outstanding. Directors and managers have a clear focus on the success of the programme and monitor its performance well. The governance of the programme is outstanding. BAES has made significant improvements since the last inspection. The outcomes for learners and the quality of provision are outstanding and learners gain exceptional technical and employment skills.
7. Apprentices enjoy their training and speak highly of their experiences. They are very well trained, often in well-resourced workshops, and benefit from working on advanced and complex engineering products alongside well-qualified mentors and trainers. Apprentices also gain exceptional confidence, communication and team-working skills through the outstanding opportunities for community, sports and charity work. BAES's programmes meet the needs and interests of their learners very well.
8. Arrangements to safeguard learners are outstanding. Learners state that they feel very safe and readily apply safe working practices during their training and at work. The well-being of apprentices is a high priority for BAES and it actively promotes healthy living and safety both at work and beyond. Equality and diversity are promoted well and BAES is very successful in recruiting women into its engineering programmes. All learners at BAES achieve equally well.

Main findings

- Outcomes for learners are outstanding. Engineering success rates have improved consistently for the past three years and are well above the national average. Timely success rates are also high and significantly above the national average for engineering.
- Learners' progression into employment, in their careers, and onto higher qualifications is outstanding. All learners who finish their apprenticeship retain their employment with the company and usually in their placement of choice. Some 65% of learners progress on to a higher-level qualification and many continue to degree level.
- Learners' occupational skills and theoretical knowledge are outstanding. They work diligently and competently in good quality workplaces, often using their own initiative whilst working on complex high-value engineering products. Learners quickly gain high levels of self-confidence and many are promoted into more responsible roles.
- Learners feel very safe and apply safe working practices well. They have a good understanding of health and safety and take full responsibility for their own safety and that of others. BAES places a high priority on the health and safety of its learners.
- Outstanding training leads to learners' acquisition of an extensive range of engineering skills to an exceptionally high standard both in the training centres and in work. BAES has made a substantial investment in further specialist skills development workshops. However, a minority of theory lessons are uninspiring and insufficiently linked to on-the-job training.
- The range and depth of training programmes meet the needs of learners and the business exceptionally well. Learning is highly individualised and very well planned.
- Learners benefit from a comprehensive occupational welfare and employee support service which they clearly understand how to use. Learners have high regard for the well-qualified staff who provide them with close and frequent support. However, the additional learning support for a minority of learners is insufficiently organised and effective.
- Management is good. Directors and managers provide clear focus and direction to raise the quality of the programme and they demonstrate a high level of commitment. Engagement with users is good. Communication across sites has improved and management, in partnership with staff and subcontractors, has made major improvements to the quality and success of the programme.
- BAES has significantly strengthened quality improvement arrangements since the last inspection when it was identified as an area for improvement. The company has a very close working relationship with its main subcontractor, Xchanging; however, it has insufficiently thorough systems in place to manage the quality of the activities carried out by all its subcontractors.

- Arrangements to safeguard learners are outstanding. Learners' health and safety, and welfare have a very high priority throughout the company. Staff identify and respond very well to learners' welfare concerns and work very well with agencies and professionals to safeguard learners.
- Arrangements for promoting equality and diversity are good. Learners have a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities. However, learners' progress reviews do not sufficiently reinforce and extend learners' previous knowledge of equality and diversity.
- BAES continues to work successfully to increase the participation of women in engineering through the promotion of positive role models, including a number of female apprentices who act as school ambassadors. The representation of women in its engineering programmes is well above that found nationally in engineering apprenticeships.

What does BAES need to do to improve further?

- Make all theory lessons interesting and relevant by improving teaching resources and links with on-the-job training, particularly at Preston.
- Ensure that all learners receiving additional learning support benefit fully by better planning and a greater focus on helping them to develop more independence.
- Strengthen and extend quality assurance arrangements across all activities, to properly inform the monitoring and management of the whole programme.
- Fully implement the well-conceived plans to reinforce and progressively develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity throughout their apprenticeship.

Summary of the views of users as confirmed by inspectors

What learners like:

- how well the range of training meets their needs, particularly for those learners who have come into the apprenticeship directly from school
- the level of support and constructive feedback provided by the highly approachable assessors
- earning a wage while being trained
- the quality of resources for on-the-job training
- the interest shown in apprentices' progress by senior managers
- how well BAES listens to and acts on their views.

What learners would like to see improved:

- the quality of off-the-job training in local colleges and the Longridge Teaching Centre and its relevance to their job roles

- communication between the providers of off-the-job training and BAES
- better and more timely information on what they will do in forthcoming placements and on future career progression opportunities within BAES.

Main inspection report

Capacity to make and sustain improvement

Grade 2

9. BAES has good capacity to improve. Success rates continue to improve and are high. The quality of provision has significantly improved since the previous inspection and areas identified as weaknesses have been addressed. Strategic management is very good, closely aligning the programme to its business needs and exercising good governance through clear performance targets. Operational management is good, with effective structures and systems to manage and support the programme. Work opportunities are of a high standard and BAES uses resources very well in providing excellent value for money.
10. Self-assessment is accurate and inclusive and is effective in informing improvements. Inspectors agreed with the grades in the most recent report. Quality improvement arrangements are very effective in addressing many aspects of the programme, for example through the use of learners' feedback and progress monitoring. However, a few processes, particularly in subcontracted services, are inconsistent and current systems are not sufficient to allow BAES to measure and manage their quality.

Outcomes for learners

Grade 1

11. Outcomes for learners are outstanding. Engineering success rates have improved consistently for the past three years and are well above the national average. The overall success rate for engineering learners was just under 90% in 2008/09. Timely success rates are also high and significantly above the national average for engineering.
12. Learners' progression into employment and higher education is outstanding. In the last three years 96% of learners have remained in employment with the company, usually in their placement of choice. Most learners progress to higher-level qualifications and many to degree level. Learners progress well within their job roles and a significant number of ex-apprentices are managers and senior staff in the company.
13. Learners enjoy their training and develop outstanding occupational skills and theoretical knowledge. They develop good engineering and manufacturing skills, along with excellent teamwork and organisational and communication skills, working on advanced engineering products. Learners attain qualifications and skills significantly more demanding than the requirements of the apprenticeship framework.
14. Learners say that they feel very safe and are free from harassment and bullying. They acquire a very good understanding of health and safety and healthy lifestyles, which are thoroughly reinforced throughout their training. Learners' well-being is continually monitored by BAES' occupational health service as part of their health monitoring programme.

15. Learners engage in a significant range of community projects and enrichment activities that considerably enhance their confidence, communication and team-working skills. BAES is extremely supportive of projects, which include a school ambassador programme, charity work, team building and sports events. Learners are rightly proud of their community work. School ambassadors particularly enjoy sharing their enthusiasm for engineering with school children in both primary and secondary schools.

The quality of provision

Grade 1

16. Training is outstanding and very well organised. In the training centres, learners acquire an extensive range of engineering skills to a high standard, which prepares them well for their engineering placements. At work, learners work with highly skilled mentors who support their development well and provide valuable feedback throughout their programme. Training is very well planned and learners are set clear objectives and targets for each placement. The company has made a substantial investment in further specialist skills development workshops for learners. Most teaching and learning provided by subcontractors is good; however, learners find some lessons dull and uninspiring. In particular, teachers at Preston have insufficient access to learning materials to reinforce theory lessons with practical work. Assessment of learners' work is thorough and accurate.
17. The range and content of the provision meets the needs of learners and employers exceptionally well. Learners are very enthusiastic about their job roles and the industry in which they work. Learning is highly individualised and exceptionally well planned. Challenging targets stretch learners to achieve their full potential. Staff make good use of initial assessment and learners' prior achievements in planning learning. Xchanging staff work extremely effectively with business managers to expand the provision of work placements to meet the needs and interests of learners.
18. Partnerships with employers, schools, local colleges and local interest groups are outstanding. Effective working arrangements exist with a wide range of local schools and employer groups for the development of the new diploma, young apprenticeships and work experience programmes and the promotion of engineering as a career. Learners act as mentors and ambassadors for local schools and provide good role models. Staff at all levels of BAES are engaged in partnerships which promote apprenticeships and engineering as a career.
19. Care, guidance and support for learners are good. Learners benefit from a comprehensive occupational welfare and employee support service that they clearly understand how to use. Arrangements to support and develop learners' literacy, numeracy and language skills are comprehensive and effective but at times informal. Learners' additional learning needs are clearly identified and appropriate support is available. However, in a few cases this support is not

sufficiently structured and does not sufficiently help learners to develop independent coping strategies. Induction is comprehensive and effective. BAES provides particularly good support for learners who are unable to attend for extended periods because of illness or personal difficulties. Learners have access to a confidential advice service, comprehensive advice on alcohol and drugs, and access to gambling and debt counselling. A company bullying helpline is also available.

Leadership and management

Grade 2

20. Leadership and management are good. Strategic management is very effective. BAES has developed the apprenticeship programme well to closely match both national priorities and its own business needs. Operational management is good. Systems and opportunities for staff development are good and staff are very enthusiastic and focused on learners' success. Management of resources is effective and in many cases these resources are outstanding. The programme is well planned locally to meet the needs of individual sites. However, arrangements to monitor the work of subcontractors are underdeveloped and do not provide BAES with sufficient knowledge of the quality of subcontractors' work.
21. Governance of the programme is outstanding. The company has focused particularly well on developing appropriate structures and reporting processes to ensure good governance at a strategic level. Directors and managers provide clear focus and direction to raise the quality of the programme and they demonstrate a high level of commitment.
22. BAES's arrangements for safeguarding are outstanding. Health and safety has a very high priority throughout the company and learners have a very good understanding of safe working practices that is continually reinforced. Where required, BAES has ensured that subcontractors' staff and their own employees have had enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. Appropriate records are maintained. BAES is well prepared for Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) registration. Staff identify and respond very well to learners' welfare concerns and work very well with agencies and professionals to safeguard learners. Learners are well supported through a comprehensive range of advice and guidance, including personal financial management, safe driving, drug and alcohol awareness and sexual health.
23. BAES's arrangements for promoting equality and diversity are good. The company's clear and concise code of conduct is at the heart of appropriate policies and processes to promote equality and diversity, and mutual respect. Learners have a very good understanding of their rights and responsibilities and feel valued. They know what to do if they feel they are being discriminated against or subjected to harassment, and are confident their concerns are dealt with promptly, effectively and with sensitivity. However, staff do not sufficiently reinforce and extend learners' knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity during progress reviews. BAES recognised this in its self-assessment

report and is taking well-conceived steps to remedy this. BAES analyses recruitment and achievement data carefully and to good effect to monitor the recruitment and performance of under-represented groups. There are no significant differences in the success rates for different groups of apprentices. The company continues to work successfully to increase the participation of women in engineering through the promotion of positive role models, including a number of female apprentices who act as school ambassadors. The number of women on its engineering apprenticeship is well above the national average, although participation by minority ethnic groups is slightly lower than their representation in the local community. BAES is working hard to promote its programmes within its local communities and among the many examples of community work are cultural awareness events that help to raise the profile of the apprenticeship programme with minority ethnic groups.

24. Engagement with users to promote improvement is good. BAES has developed effective arrangements to gather and analyse the views of learners and has established a well-developed system of learner forums which are valued by the apprentices. The company listens to what learners say and ensures that effective action is taken to address their concerns. Communication and the sharing of good practice across sites has improved.
25. The self-assessment process is effective and contributes well to improving the programme. BAES has significantly strengthened quality arrangements since the previous inspection when it was identified as an area for improvement. These are effective in monitoring and improving the outcomes of the programme through good target setting and a well-structured framework of contract management meetings. BAES has a very close working relationship with its main subcontractor, Xchanging, to whom it has contracted responsibility for many aspects of programme quality. However, it has insufficiently thorough systems in place to ensure the quality of the activities carried out by all its subcontractors. Internal verification is satisfactory and improving but planning to sample assessors' and learners' work is insufficiently robust and clear.
26. BAES uses resources well in providing excellent value for money. Learners benefit from an outstanding programme and a high proportion succeed. Resources are well managed and often outstanding and the management of health and safety is very good. Staff training and development are good and are closely matched to business need. Learning resources are good overall and in some cases they are outstanding.

Information about the inspection

27. Three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the Quality Manager – Funded Learning Programmes for Xchanging, 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 Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding bodies, 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 employers had recently completed on behalf of the provider. They also observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. Inspectors collected evidence from programmes in each of the subject areas the provider offers.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)
name of provider/college

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	Employer responsive
Approximate number of enrolled learners	623	623
Full-time learners		
Part-time learners		
Overall effectiveness	1	1
Capacity to improve	2	
Outcomes for learners	1	1
How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?	1	
How well do learners attain their learning goals?	1	
How well do learners progress?	1	
How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?	1	
How safe do learners feel?	1	
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?*	1	
How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?*	1	
Quality of provision	1	1
How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?	1	
How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?	1	
How well partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners?	1	
How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2	
Leadership and management	2	2
How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?	2	
How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?*	1	
How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?	1	
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?	2	
How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?	1	

*where applicable to the type of provision

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