

Defence Munitions - Gosport

Focused monitoring visit report

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Type of provider: Employer

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Focused Monitoring Visit: Main Findings

Context and focus of visit

Defence Munitions (DM), Gosport, is a Ministry of Defence (MoD) establishment with a function to maintain, store and distribute ammunition and weapons primarily for the Royal Navy. DM operates an apprenticeship programme for craft apprentices at level 2 and level 3 in mechanical engineering. Two training officers manage the programme and coordinate the college training and the apprentices' work in the DM workshops, reporting to the head of establishment. Apprentices complete their foundation training of a BTEC national and higher national certificate at Fareham College in the first year and spend a further two years in the munitions workshops whilst continuing their qualifications on a day release basis.

Six apprentices are recruited annually and nearly all have continued employment on completion of their training. Eighteen apprentices were at various stages of training of the three-year programme at the time of the visit.

At the last inspection, the provider's overall effectiveness and capacity to improve were satisfactory. Outcomes for apprentices and the quality of the provision were good. Leadership, management and safeguarding were satisfactory. Equality and diversity and the engineering provision were graded good.

This report focuses on the themes explored during the monitoring visit.

Themes

Self-assessment and improvement planning

What progress has Defence Munitions made in using self - assessment and quality improvement planning to drive improvements since the last inspection?	Reasonable progress
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At the previous inspection, self-assessment and quality improvement planning were satisfactory but the development plan was not routinely used or updated. DM has made reasonable progress in implementing the recommendations of the previous inspection and in managing improvement. Self-assessment and improvement planning are now more effective. The apprentice board is the main source for identifying, implementing and monitoring the effectiveness of improvements. It is a purposeful meeting and is a very suitable way of managing improvements in such small provision. The meetings every six weeks involve staff, apprentice representatives and the college link manager, who all take responsibility for improvement actions. Most actions identified for improvement are dealt with rapidly and confirmed at the apprentice board. A systematic process gathers the views of everyone involved in training, including workshop staff and managers, through well-managed surveys and discussions. The organisation continues to gather apprentices' and employers' views through the apprentice board. Close work with the college has established a strong shared programme of joint lesson observations. The provider

has strengthened internal verification by adding more assessors and verifiers to the assessment team.

Outcomes for apprentices

What progress has been made in ensuring apprentice retention, success and progression remains high?

Reasonable progress

At the last inspection, success rates for apprentices were outstanding; the 100% success rate has been maintained. Since the inspection in 2009, all leavers have successfully completed all aspects of their programme and most are then employed by DM, with small numbers transferring to other Ministry of Defence establishments. Recruitment and selection procedures are very strong and DM has further strengthened these to ensure apprentices selected are highly motivated and most likely to complete their training. Improved communications and much closer liaison with Fareham College ensure apprentices understand the benefits of the initial engineering training. Improvements to personal, welfare and academic support have been critical in helping apprentices make the transition between school and work. Teams and individual apprentices have been particularly successful in winning MoD and national competitions. Success in these high profile competitions is very effective in providing additional motivation and challenge to apprentices to promote their engineering and teamwork skills.

Quality of provision

What progress has been made in identifying specific learning objectives for the development of apprentices' skills in the workshops?

Reasonable progress

At the last inspection, learning objectives were not set for apprentices when they commenced work placements. While there has been little significant change in the overall approach to work placements, specific learning objectives are dictated clearly by the detailed requirements of the standards-based apprentice training scheme. This requires specific activities to be completed and assessed in each workshop, although some of the engineering tasks, by the nature of the work, are reactive rather than pre-planned activities. However, apprentices do clearly gain the experience they need to meet the requirements of their funded programme. This is demonstrated by the high success rates, the positive external validation reports and the progression of so many apprentices into permanent employment.

Improved liaison with Fareham College has enhanced tutors', apprentices' and apprentice masters' understanding of how the college training links to specific aspects of the apprentices' work. Over the summer, the college provided additional welding and milling to develop apprentices' skills and enable the apprentices to complete work on specific projects. Improved support from apprentice masters, many of whom are now National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) assessors, ensures apprentices understand the requirements of the business and apprentice training. The constructive apprentice board meetings ensure that personal objectives, such as

punctuality or commitment and work-placement expectations, meet the needs of individual apprentices.

What progress has Defence Munitions made in improving the standardisation of assessment and verification and in improving teaching and learning? **Reasonable progress**

The previous inspection recommended that the quality and consistency of assessments should be improved by making better use of standardisation meetings. Reasonable progress has been made in improving these aspects. DM now holds standardisation meetings more frequently, and these properly address quality and consistency. Other meetings with apprentice masters and with those concerned with work placements ensure consistency in the approach to assessment. Observations of assessors are now conducted and share consistency and good practice. However, observations in the current year are now overdue. Much improved communications and liaison with Fareham College have led to prompt actions where concerns have been identified. DM's apprentice training manager is also now part of a joint lesson observation scheme at the college and through this work is helping to improve training and learning, both in the workshops and in the college. New work placements, providing a wider experience for some apprentices, have been particularly successful in developing specific weapons-related skills and personal work understanding. One placement on a local naval base has been set up with an appropriate apprentice charter and allows apprentices to work more closely with naval personnel.

Leadership and management

What progress has been made in ensuring actions and targets for improvement are monitored to ensure they are effective and completed? **Reasonable progress**

At the last inspection, actions and targets set for improvement were not effectively monitored or managed. The management team makes very good use of the apprentice board meetings to monitor and manage actions for improvement. Meetings occur every six weeks, chaired by the production manager, and are attended by the training officers from the college and representatives from the workshops and apprentices. The board acts as the forum for monitoring performance against specified actions and targets and holds individuals to account for the progress made. The board manages most actions well and seeks appropriate resolutions quickly. Apprentice representatives at the meeting provide effective communications back to the rest of the apprentices to gain feedback and response to ideas and implemented actions. The training officers manage a calendar of quality actions effectively and report progress to the board. Standardisation meetings for assessors and apprentice masters provide a good opportunity for monitoring the quality of NVQ assessments and providing useful feedback to assessors. Any serious or complex concerns from this group are then picked up by the apprentice board.

To what extent has the provider improved safeguarding arrangements since the previous inspection?**Reasonable progress**

Although safeguarding was judged as satisfactory at the previous inspection, DM staff have made reasonable progress in addressing specific concerns raised at the time. Training officers have received specialist safeguarding training by staff from Fareham College. Apprentice masters have also attended an appropriate briefing. However, in both cases this was over two years ago and refresher training is not yet planned. All apprentices are well aware of what safeguarding means and who they should turn to if they have concerns either at college or at work. One of the apprentice training officers has relevant counselling qualifications and plays a very active role in dealing with apprentices' personal issues. DM effectively maintains appropriate records of meetings and interventions. However, too many documents are used to record each case, which complicates the picture for others in the absence of those directly involved. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks have been completed for the training staff routinely involved with apprentices. Alongside routine discussions at the apprentice board, DM reasonably relies on Ofsted reports to assure them that the college partner is meeting safeguarding requirements. Appropriate risk assessments for outdoor activities are carried out by the professional company running the schemes.

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