

The Military Preparation College

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates		28 July–1 August 2014
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Outstanding-1
	Previous inspection:	Good-2
Outcomes for learners		Outstanding-1
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Outstanding-1
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Outstanding-1

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider is outstanding because:

- Leaders and staff display the highest expectations of learners, many of whom have poor levels of previous achievement, and this inspires them to re-engage successfully in learning.
- Learners quickly develop outstanding work-related skills and significantly improve their levels of physical fitness.
- The large majority of learners are successful in their applications to join the armed forces, finding work with local employers, or continuing learning on further education and training courses.
- Managers have carefully designed the study programme to meet employers' and individual learners' needs.
- Managers have ensured that learners make excellent progress and benefit from consistently high standards of instruction and support at every one of the geographically dispersed college centres.
- Leaders ensure that rigorous selection and high-quality professional development activities enable staff to meet the high standards demanded.
- Learners enjoy their studies and benefit from instructors who use their up-to-date military experience and excellent teaching skills to inspire them to succeed and produce very high quality work.
- Instructors ensure that learners develop an outstanding awareness of the importance of equality of opportunity and valuing diversity in everyday life and, at work, to improve individual and team performance.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- The use of information and communication technology is effective but requires further development to help learners become more independent in their studies.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Outstanding
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- Outcomes for learners are outstanding. The vast majority of learners start the employability study programme with low levels of prior attainment and low self-esteem. Many also have significant barriers to learning; nevertheless, most learners make excellent progress.
- Learners rapidly develop outstanding work-related skills and excellent physical fitness, which prepare them extremely well for employment in the armed forces, other employment, or for further education and training. These skills include excellent behaviour, discipline and teamwork; outstanding timekeeping; dramatically increased confidence and self-esteem; strong communication, public speaking and interview skills. Attendance is very good and learners arrive on time at learning sessions.
- The very large majority of learners secure jobs or places on further education and training courses. At the time of inspection, almost half were already successful in their applications to join the armed forces. This is significantly above the success rate for direct entrants. In addition, learners are better prepared and much more successful in basic training than direct entrants.
- Instructors are very successful in rapidly improving learners' employment-related skills and physical fitness. Most learners who leave early do so when selected to join the armed forces as there are regular intakes of recruits. Many other learners remain on the study programme to gain the qualifications they need to find employment or enter further education and training.
- Learners make excellent progress in developing their English and mathematics. A high proportion of learners, many of whom started with very low-level functional skills, achieve English and mathematics qualifications at significantly higher levels. Those who achieve at level 1 have the opportunity to make progress toward level 2 before completing the study programme. Many learners produce work well above the level required for the level 1 qualification; for example, they display much higher reading and speaking skills.
- Instructors ensure that all groups of learners are equally well supported. As a result, the few small achievement gaps between different groups of learners have been eliminated.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
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- Learners benefit from outstanding teaching, learning and assessment, which lead to outstanding outcomes. They are quickly and strongly motivated by instructors and support staff who set very high expectations for punctuality, attendance, behaviour and progress.
- Well-qualified teaching staff plan excellent theory and practical learning sessions which use the college's distinctive and very effective approach to teaching, learning and assessment. For example, during a practical session on target indication and the ability to judge distance, learners made rapid progress because the instructor clearly explained, demonstrated and supported learners as they practised their new skills. Instructors use their own military experience exceptionally well to make learning enjoyable and very relevant to selection for careers in the armed forces and the basic training that will follow.
- Physical training activities are outstanding. Appropriately challenging activities meet each learner's current assessed levels of fitness, and learners complete activities enthusiastically to

achieve or exceed their individual targets. Using a system that clearly identifies individuals' fitness levels, instructors know whether learners are putting in an appropriate level of effort. This also has a very positive impact because it encourages learners to get fitter and for this to be recognised by their instructors and peers.

- Learners help to set their own progress targets and instructors challenge them to meet or exceed these targets. Instructors recognise learners' achievements through weekly awards, certificates and promotion to leadership roles, for example in leading a section of peers. This regular celebration of success inspires learners to put maximum effort into every aspect of their learning.
- Learners visibly enjoy their learning and benefit from high-quality, carefully structured written materials and very useful workbooks which they use to record their learning and progress. Learners support each other exceptionally well, and this teaches more able learners new skills and supports the less able and new learners. Learners produce outstanding work that often exceeds the requirements of the qualification. For example, most learners become confident public speakers within a few weeks on the study programme. Learners give accomplished and mature presentations at the well-attended parades and family days where qualifications are awarded and celebrated.
- Instructors use very detailed initial assessments to ensure learning meets individuals' needs very effectively in the vast majority of learning sessions. During daily planning meetings, instructors review learners' progress from the previous day and adjust their activities for that day to support learners' further progress. Instructors provide learners with excellent feedback so that they know precisely what they need to do to improve. Learners greatly value the feedback in their thorough monthly reviews. Instructors successfully develop learners' ability to reflect on their own progress. Assessment feedback, both oral and written, is detailed, constructive and frequent.
- Learners understand the vital importance of English and mathematics in their personal and working lives because their instructors, where necessary supported by specialist tutors, build their development into every learning session. The development of learners' mathematics during physical training activities is outstanding. For example, in a swimming challenge, learners were required to calculate the number of lengths of the swimming pool required to achieve the group target and their personal contribution to the target. They reported their progress towards the target by using percentage calculations. In another session, learners accurately estimated distance and calculated angles that were needed for an artillery exercise. Learners from the British Nepali community receive very good support to improve their standards of written and spoken English, and most make very good progress.
- Information, advice and guidance are outstanding and this is reflected in the very high proportion of learners who gain employment or places on further education and training courses. Regular career talks from armed forces personnel provide great insight into the realities of these careers. Highly effective interview practice, conducted by armed forces recruiting staff, helps learners develop their skills in preparation for military and civilian recruitment processes.
- Accommodation and specialist equipment at college centres are mostly of high quality, and excellent use is made of local parks and training areas for military skills training. The use of information and communication technology to enhance learning requires further improvement. Learners are able to use tablet devices very effectively to support learning in some, but not yet all, centres.
- Instructors ensure that learning activities are carefully risk assessed and that there is a strong focus on health and safety. For example, they carefully check that learners drink sufficient water during physical training activities.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Instructors reinforce equality and diversity exceptionally well in learning sessions. Learners feel able to disclose concerns openly because of the supportive and safe environment. Learners are encouraged to challenge each other's prejudices; for example, in one session, there was a robust discussion regarding women undertaking front-line roles in the armed forces.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Leadership and management are outstanding. Senior leaders place their highest priority on supporting all learners to succeed, and this has a very positive impact. Highly successful and cohesive strategies, policies and approaches to teaching, learning and assessment enable almost all learners to make excellent progress. The exceptional focus on supporting all learners to succeed extends to the creation of a charitable trust. The trust raises considerable additional funds to support learners, further improve learning resources and to support community charities near college centres.
- Leaders, managers and instructors have exceptionally high expectations for what all learners can achieve. This is particularly important because many learners arrive at the college with very low levels of attainment, low self-esteem and a range of barriers to learning. Because all teaching staff uphold these high expectations, learners are inspired to levels of performance that far exceed their own previous expectations.
- Lead instructors at each centre operate within a very effective and supportive professional development, management and policy framework. This empowers them to take full responsibility for managing excellent learning activities that meet demanding standards. Excellent recruitment, induction and training of new instructors and managers, who also benefit from clear strategies and comprehensive policies, ensure that instructors in each centre meet learners' needs to consistently high standards.
- Managers and instructors use to great effect an information system which provides a wide range of useful real-time management information. For example, managers use the system to quality assure activities, including health and safety aspects, by remotely taking part in all daily planning meetings; this ensures that all activities are carefully risk assessed to keep learners safe. Senior managers set demanding targets and regularly use the information system to monitor each centre's achievement against these targets. These very effective quality assurance processes include the subcontracted provision that managers have very successfully integrated within the college.
- Managers use rigorous selection processes to recruit instructors. The vast majority of instructors have a military background, previous teaching experience and relevant qualifications. They then go through an excellent induction period followed by undertaking an accredited practitioner's course. During the course, they learn the extremely effective approaches used by college instructors to help learners make rapid progress and achieve their full potential. Instructors further benefit from very well structured development over the first year of employment and a wide range of ongoing professional development activities of a very high calibre, all of which help to improve further the quality of learning.
- The extremely effective daily planning meetings include all instructors and staff at each centre. During the meeting, lead instructors ensure that the day's learning activities are well planned, fully resourced and safe. Staff review the previous day's learning and identify what was particularly effective. They review individual learners' progress, recognise good practice and require individual teachers to develop good practice sessions for further training.
- Managers ensure that the results of regular, accurate lesson observations inform instructors' annual appraisals and support their continual improvement. Where required, firm but supportive management action ensures that instructors improve their performance.
- Leaders and managers secure the views of all staff, learners and employers through consultation and surveys during the annual self-assessment cycle. This creates a very clear picture of what the college team does well and identifies areas for further improvement. Most of this accurate and inclusive evaluation, including the priorities for further improvement, is detailed in a very effective 'strategy framework' document. Leaders use this to provide clear strategic direction and to set challenging targets to guide sustainable improvement.
- Managers regularly review the curriculum and ensure it meets employers' and learners' needs. This review process includes close consultation with employers and learners. As a result, the

study programme prepares learners extremely effectively for armed forces selection and the basic training that follows.

- Managers have ensured that equality and diversity are extremely well promoted during induction and reinforced appropriately in teaching and learning sessions. They deal with all learners' concerns quickly and supportively and monitor progress through comprehensive risk assessment and recording. The inclusive culture and outstanding team spirit among learners ensure a very positive learning environment. Bullying and harassment are not tolerated, and inspectors found no evidence of them.
- Very comprehensive safeguarding arrangements meet all statutory requirements. Staff are trained in safeguarding during induction and key safeguarding staff are trained to higher levels. Regional managers and lead instructors have very good working relationships with the relevant local safeguarding agencies and take rapid appropriate action where necessary. Managers keep detailed records of any action taken and any concerns raised by learners.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

The Military Preparation College

Inspection grades are based on a provider's performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Outcomes for learners	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
The effectiveness of leadership and management	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Employability training	1

Provider details

Type of provider	Independent learning provider							
Age range of learners	16-18							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	550							
Principal/CEO	Mr Huw Lewis MBE							
Date of previous inspection	July 2011							
Website address	www.mpct.co.uk/							
Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	276	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	-	-	-	-	-	-		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	-		-		-			
Number of learners aged 14-16								
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	276							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Quality Personal Development							

Contextual information

The college has eight training centres in England. This provision is located mainly in urban centres in south east England. A new centre has just opened in Bristol and a subcontractor provides a centre near Hull. The employability study programme prepares learners for selection to serve in the armed forces and the basic training that follows, whatever their previous academic record. Many of these learners were not in employment, education or training before they started at the college.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Mark Shackleton HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and five additional inspectors, assisted by the senior director as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements over the last three years to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded the sector subject areas listed in the report above.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/handbook-for-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-september-2012>

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