

Nine Armed Forces settings rated good or outstanding under Ofsted new inspection regime

The annual report draws on evidence from 14 inspections carried out at the request of the Ministry of Defence (MoD), and under a new inspection framework.

The [new inspection regime](#) aligns with Ofsted's education inspection framework but is contextualised for Armed Forces initial training.

Under the new arrangements, inspectors identify strengths and weaknesses to inform key judgements on the quality of training and support; the personal and professional development of recruits and trainees; the quality of facilities, infrastructure and resources, and the effectiveness of leadership and management.

Army Foundation College, Harrogate, and the Defence Fire Training Unit at Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire were both judged outstanding in all 4 key judgements and for overall effectiveness. Another 7 establishments were graded good overall, and 2 were rated requires improvement.

We found there is a lot to celebrate in the work of the strongest establishments, including well-coordinated care and welfare arrangements and highly effective training. However, much remains to be done. Serious weaknesses persist in resources, infrastructure, accommodation, self-assessment and improvement planning. For example, inspectors found that, at some establishments, heating and hot water are unreliable and a couple had several accommodation blocks that suffered from sewerage failures. The poor living conditions in these establishments meant that senior officers spent too much time trying to secure funding to improve outdated, non-functioning or badly maintained infrastructure, rather than focusing on the quality of training and the care and welfare of trainees.

Previous annual reports have highlighted the same problems for nearly 2 decades. If the MoD is to deal with this head-on, we recommend that all Regular and Reserve training establishments:

- urgently deal with the continuing and repeated failures in infrastructure, in particular in the accommodation used by recruits and trainees, so that they live and train in good conditions. This will allow commanding officers (COs) and their staff to concentrate on the training, care and welfare of recruits and trainees, rather than maintaining and repairing their establishments.
- provide all phase 2 trainees – those who are about to start their first professional role – with improved living facilities in their accommodation blocks.

Inspections of 9 Regular training establishments, 2 Reserve units and 3 support and assurance visits to University Services Units (USU) headquarters contributed to the annual report. All inspections were carried out between October 2020 and May 2021.