

HMP The Verne

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- preparation for life and work programmes:
 - employability training
 - literacy, numeracy and ESOL
 - personal development and social integration

Description of the provider

1. HMP The Verne (the prison) is an adult category C training prison for men, situated on the Isle of Portland, near Weymouth in Dorset, covering a site of approximately 50 acres. It currently holds approximately 600 offenders with an average length of stay of approximately nine months. All offenders are sentenced. The prison has traditionally held many foreign national offenders. Over 60% of its current offenders are foreign nationals, with the highest proportion being from Nigeria. Over 50 prisoners are serving life sentences. Most prisoners are engaged in work or education and training. A small number of prisoners aged 65 or over choose not to work.
2. Basic skills and work-related activities are contracted to Strode college. English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses and social and life skills programmes are contracted to A4e. Information, advice and guidance (IAG) is provided by Tribal. A range of subjects are offered in the education department and over 300 offenders are enrolled on classes. Some offenders are working independently on distance learning university courses. Education staff also visit the industrial workshops and the gymnasium to teach literacy, numeracy and key skills. Vocational qualifications are offered in the kitchens, gymnasium, gardens, cleaning and in the construction workshops. The construction qualifications are in brickwork and manufacturing operations. Four production workshops offer wood machining and assembly, lobster pot manufacturing, television repair and packaging work. In addition, offenders work on the wings, in the library and as orderlies.
3. The head of learning and skills was appointed in January 2004 and is responsible for vocational training, education and the workshops. The day-to-day management of the education department is the responsibility of the provider's education staff. The library is contracted to Dorset County library service.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Employability training	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Literacy, numeracy and ESOL	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Personal development and social integration	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Employability training	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Literacy, numeracy and ESOL	Satisfactory: Grade 3
Personal development and social integration	Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

4. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Overall achievement and standards are good. The overall quality of provision is satisfactory. More specifically the quality of provision for employability training, and literacy, numeracy and ESOL is satisfactory and good for personal development and social integration. Leadership and management are good. The prison's approach to equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

5. The prison has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements. The overall strategies for improving and developing the prison are well developed and understood by staff. Since the previous inspection the prison has, for example, initiated plans to change the construction curriculum to extend the vocational training provision and improve offenders' employability prospects. This has been based on a comprehensive labour market review and thorough needs analysis. Achievement of qualifications across the provision has been consistently high for the last year. Strengths from the previous inspection for leadership and management have generally been maintained and those relating to external communications and partnership links have been further strengthened. The collection and use of data particularly in terms of achievement and progress, a weakness at the previous inspection, is now satisfactory.
6. The self-assessment process is well developed, established and very effective. Action-planning for improvement is thorough. Improvement plans link well to the overall strategic objectives for learning and skills within the prison. Staff understand the self-assessment process and can identify its importance in driving continuous improvement. The self-assessment process covers all areas of the prison and involves all external partner organisations. The self-assessment report is detailed and clearly identifies areas for development which are articulated in strategies for continuous improvement. The report is highly and constructively self-critical and accurate. It is seen as an important document that underpins and supports the culture of improvement exhibited by all staff in the establishment. The quality improvement group is very active and well represented and supported by all areas of the prison. The report includes many of the strengths and most of the areas for improvement identified by inspectors.

Key strengths

- Very good achievement of qualifications
- Good support for learners during learning sessions
- Good provision of information, advice and guidance
- Good strategic planning for learning and skills
- Strong emphasis on continuous improvement
- Strong culture of mutual respect

Key areas for improvement

- Development and implementation of planned learning and skills programmes to meet the needs of foreign national prisoners and those serving longer sentences
- Implementation of appropriate specialist training for staff
- Provision of appropriate IT and learning support resources for those studying distance learning programmes

Main findings

Employability training

Achievement and standards

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

7. Achievement rates are very good on most programmes and learners make good progress towards their learning aims. Across the provision they range between 90 and 100%. However, only 30% of the prison population were able to participate in accredited work related skills training at the time of the inspection.
8. All learners develop good vocational skills especially in PE and construction. In many PE learning sessions learners demonstrate good performance analysis and coaching skills. They clearly develop good rapport and provide enthusiastic motivation for other learners. In construction learners develop good bricklaying and painting and decorating skills. In all areas experienced learners are used well to complete jobs around the establishment which contribute to their learning and skills development. Learners are able to undertake a good range of practical skills tests in horticulture and NVQs in catering. Learners develop good communication and interpersonal skills, particularly in the gardens, where they take pride in looking after the small animals and the prison grounds.

Quality of provision

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

9. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Staff provide good support to small groups and individuals. Support for learners is effective and well directed for those with numeracy and literacy. Learners enjoy their courses. Training is planned and delivered effectively. Experienced staff deliver well paced and stimulating training sessions with differentiated work to meet the needs of all learners. All sessions observed were at least satisfactory. Practical and theory sessions are closely linked. Selected learners support staff as peer tutors, and are effectively directed by staff. In one entry level numeracy session in construction a peer tutor, with extensive accountancy experience, provided two other learners with very good individual support to help them complete complicated percentage calculations. Individual learning plans are effectively developed at the start of training. Learners have the plans for practical skills and theory training and they are kept up to date by learners and staff.
10. Resources are satisfactory in the practical skills training workshops. Training areas are large, clean, well lit and contain appropriate and well maintained training equipment. Classrooms are of a good size and are all well equipped with modern projection equipment and appropriate training aids. Apprentices are trained in groups of between nine and twelve, often with an instructor and a support orderly. Assessment and verification systems are thorough and well documented.
11. There is no pre-release course and the current provision is insufficient to meet realistic employment requirements. There are long waiting lists with over 100 potential learners waiting to access vocational skills training. Provision develops good skills but at a low level which will only support released offenders in a limited self-employment capacity. Carpentry workshops provide very limited transferable wood machining skills. Links to community work schemes and local employers are poor. The prison has identified the need to expand the provision and a number of new programmes are planned to start in lift truck operations and wider computing skills.

12. Several tutors in vocational skills have not undertaken any recent industrial updating of their skills. Staff are not aware of some of the recent changes and developments in industrial practices. Interactive whiteboards have been fitted in many workshop classrooms, but few staff have received training to use them.
13. The repair and replacement of some resources is poorly managed. In the gymnasium 66% of cardio vascular equipment is awaiting repair. Ventilation in the gymnasium and the cardio vascular area is poor. Large items of equipment, for example, a concrete mixer, do not have a strategic replacement plan to ensure they can be repaired or replaced.

Literacy, numeracy and ESOL

Achievement and standards

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

14. Achievement of qualifications is good. In literacy, achievement rates were particularly high in 2006-07, at an average of 93% across the three levels. Similarly, well over 90% of learners who started a programme achieved a national certificate in numeracy at level 1 and/or 2. Just over 87% of learners have achieved a full qualification in ESOL at entry level. Attendance and punctuality is good on all programmes.
15. Development of learners' skills is satisfactory overall. Some learners develop a good understanding of specific aspects of literacy or numeracy such as punctuation rules or methods for calculation ratios. Many learners who speak English as an additional language increase their vocabulary and understanding of grammar. Some learners report significant improvements and many develop confidence and self-esteem as they become aware of their progress. However, learners make slow progress in improving their speaking skills and pronunciation and their ability to carry out tasks independently and accurately.

Quality of provision

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

16. The quality of provision is satisfactory. The environment in the education centre is particularly welcoming. The classrooms are spacious, bright and well maintained, with colourful displays of learners' work, relevant information and useful prompts to support learning. Most tutors use a good range of learning materials and resources to provide interesting contexts for projects, discussions and other learning activities. Many learning sessions to support learners at work and on vocational courses include effective use of computers. However, most learners on discrete courses only have the opportunity to use computers to develop their literacy, numeracy and language skills through electronic worksheets and practice assessments.
17. The prison and the college work well in collaboration to review and develop the literacy and numeracy provision to widen participation. Most learners attending courses in the education department are foreign nationals. The concern about the very low numbers of UK national learners on programmes recently prompted the development of literacy and numeracy provision integrated in work and vocational training. Early indications are that this new provision is successfully attracting previously reluctant learners who have had a poor prior experience of education. Similarly, a newly developed outreach provision for learners at entry level and working in carpentry is successfully recruiting learners to help them develop the basic skills needed before joining the induction to work course.

18. Learners receive good individual support in learning sessions. Tutors quickly develop a thorough understanding of learners' individual learning needs and ways of working and use this information well to provide individual support and plan learning activities. Tutors provide good explanations, interesting examples and useful tips and hints. Learning activities are planned well and most learning is productive and purposeful. Learners also receive good support from the peer tutors allocated to every session. Although these support tutors do not receive any formal training, they quickly pick up tips from tutors on how to coach learners and are patient and understanding in the way they assist learning. However, some learners tend to become dependent on this support, especially when it involves translations into their language, and are slow at developing the confidence to work alone.
19. Learners receive comprehensive advice and guidance in a well equipped information centre. Staff use initial interviews and assessments effectively to identify learners' skills levels and agree medium- and long-term goals. Tutors carry out further diagnostic assessments and plan learning programmes appropriately. Schemes of work and lesson plans are satisfactory, as are the learning targets in individual learning plans. All learners and tutors use individual learning plans systematically and keep effective records of all their learning activities. However, most learners do not receive sufficient feedback on their progress in developing their skills. Very few review documents are completed adequately by tutors. Systems for monitoring learners' progress are not used routinely. Records, including those used for review boards, primarily include courses attended and qualifications gained, and most learners are able to provide similar information. Although some learners can talk about the specific skills they have developed when prompted further, few individual learning plans list these achievements clearly.
20. The prison has insufficient expertise in meeting the language needs of many of its population. Initial assessments do not include listening and speaking skills and learners do not therefore receive comprehensive information on all aspects of their abilities and development needs. There is not enough language support for learners on programmes other than ESOL. Learners who speak English as an additional language are not supported adequately to develop the vocabulary and grammar or listening and speaking skills required for work or their main programme, including literacy and numeracy. Most members of staff are not aware of the language support needs of these learners or of what they need to do to make communications effective at work and during learning sessions.
21. The learning and skills provision does not adequately identify or meet some learners' additional support needs. Although a few provider and prison staff have attended training to raise their awareness of specific learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, there is currently no specialist assessment or support. The prison has identified this gap in provision and one member of staff is currently attending a course at level 4.

Personal development and social integration

Achievement and standards

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

22. Achievements on accredited programmes are very good. Most learners completed their courses and in the last 12 months achievement in money management is 93%, in distance

learning is 90% and in English speaking, wider key skills and graphic design is 100%. Attendance on the key skills magazine course is particularly good.

23. Learners produce very good design projects. They are proud of the skills they develop. Learners on the 3-D design course produce good innovative designs and models. They value the skills they are developing and the opportunities they have to experiment in a range of materials and media. Learners make good use of photographs in their portfolios to evidence the designs they produce. Learners on the key skills magazine course produce very good and interesting publications. They use the wide range of skills they develop well to produce both a newsletter and, at the end of their course, a magazine which includes articles raising awareness on multi-cultural issues and religions and promoting healthy living and learning and skills opportunities.

Quality of provision

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

24. Teaching and learning is satisfactory. In better lessons, learners are actively engaged with good individual support by teachers. Individual learning plans are well used to set targets and agree actions and record progress. In some sessions insufficient guidance is provided for individual learning. Peer tutors, using the skills they have learnt, work enthusiastically in lessons to support learners.
25. Learners develop good personal and social skills. They are keen and attentive in lessons and value the personal responsibility to manage their learning. Learners develop confidence in their presentational skills on the English Speaking Board course and develop their creative skills in enrichment activities. The cultural mix in the prison enriches personal and social learning. Many learners on the challenge to change programme value the personal and social skills they develop through this experience and the positive effect it has had on their lives. Staff have observed improvements in behaviour and relationships. Learners on this programme have fewer problems with drugs, adjudications and assaults than the general offender population.
26. Learners on the distance learning programmes are well motivated and challenged well through effective support to manage their learning. Actions agreed by these learners are not formally recorded to remind learners of their commitments to their individual learning. A formal progress monitoring and review framework is being development. Many staff in the prison give learners on distance learning courses good support, particularly with accessing information to use in their assignments.
27. Learners on the challenge to change programme complete an initial assessment to assess their suitability for this programme. Tutors use a detailed teaching manual in sessions. Learners take part in an end of course assessment and receive report on progress. Their general progress is reviewed each month. Individual learning plans are not yet in place.
28. Offenders' access to technology to support distance learning is insufficient. The prison has identified this as an area for improvement. Current arrangements prevent learners' access to the internet. Access to higher level courses is increasingly restrictive. Learners are unable to effectively research for their assignments, or have on-line tutorials with their subject specific tutor or share learning with peer learners. Learners do not have access to laptop computers for in-cell study. There are insufficient computers that can support software linked to some distance learning programmes.

29. The prison provides well structured enrichment activities. These include single sessions on creative writing, drama, diversity and spoken English. Learners are also encouraged to improve their own learning through individual projects and community links. Through these activities, many learners are able to gain qualifications. Training is available to prison orderlies in customer service and working with others. Some peer tutors are studying for a certificate in education.
30. Learners on the challenge to change programme attend well structured courses in community living, self-esteem, interpersonal relationships, citizenship and positive role models. Community meetings play a strong role in problem-solving, challenging behaviour and social interaction.
31. Information advice and guidance (IAG) arrangements are very good. All offenders new to the prison receive a good and detailed initial assessment of need. Learners and staff work effectively to identify needs. Learners value the realistic target-setting and action-planning. Learning plans are well linked to the provision available in the prison. Links with sentence planning are insufficiently timely. Learners' progress is regularly and effectively reviewed. Learners have good access to a wide range of advice and support services and a good range of resources. These include group work and workshops on improving jobsearch skills and curriculum vitae writing. Learners make particularly good use of the free movement at lunchtimes to access the IAG centre. Methods to assess the outcome of this service as learners move to other prisons or release are underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

32. Leadership and management of learning and skills within the prison is good. Very effective strategic planning is an integral part of the development of the prison's learning and skills provision. A labour market review and comprehensive needs analysis has informed the development of the construction provision and has resulted in the implementation of multi skills courses. These are designed to equip prisoners with employability skills to meet labour market demands in the areas they are to be released. Further provision for nationally accredited and recognised programmes for electronic servicing are planned. Additional lift truck qualifications are also planned and further wood machining qualifications are due to start in September. Construction site qualifications are also planned.
33. Very effective collaboration and communication with partners provides a platform for development of learning and skills. All partners attend a dynamic and effective quality improvement group. Reports are fed into the meetings and action plans are evident which are closely recorded and monitored. All providers attend at senior level and provide the prison with the views of staff and learners, which are used to inform the self-assessment process. Prison staff share lesson observations with provider staff and frequently share staff training and development. Close relationships with local county councils exist and support initiatives such as school links and family support for traveller groups. Close relationships also ensure the sharing of good practice for example the use on the learner

owned Individual Learning Plans which are used effectively and extensively throughout the establishment to support the sentence planning process. The IAG provision is good well managed and supports prisoners well throughout their sentence

34. The environment in learning and skills is particularly positive, supportive and purposeful. This is significant, given the extensive range of nationalities, cultures and ethnicity of the prison population. A rich mix of diverse backgrounds and beliefs is found on most courses and workplaces. Most learners work together very effectively, show mutual respect and are keen to share ideas and support one another. Staff generally deal effectively with inappropriate behaviour.
35. The prison has a strong focus on continuous improvement and places a high value on the inclusiveness of the self-assessment process. Course reviews are thorough and areas for development in all aspects of the prison including IAG and the library are acknowledged and treated in an equal manner. Data on retention and achievement is collected. Many areas for development highlighted at the previous inspection have been addressed or are being addressed. Reducing re-offending is a priority and the prison has recognised the need to focus more on the needs of foreign nationals and those serving longer sentences.
36. The prison has improved its approach to implementing equality of opportunity with more systematic collaboration and joint planning among staff with responsibility for equality and diversity. Some good recent initiatives include the development of a diversity centre and the increased range of information available in modern foreign languages. Training in equality and diversity for prison staff and key partners, including providers' staff, is satisfactory. The session on diversity for all offenders on induction is very well planned and includes a very good range of thought-provoking and pertinent activities. Many courses also include stimulating activities and discussions that continue the exploration of cultural diversity. However, this learning is not routinely reinforced or developed fully on all learning programmes or at work.
37. Offenders are provided with learning and skills activities. However, these are based on the needs of the offender population as a whole and there are no formal written strategies for addressing the needs of foreign national offenders or those serving longer term sentences. While access and the allocation process is generally fair and equitable there is insufficient account taken of the needs of individual groups. The pay structure which is inequitable often dictates the provision selected by offenders. There is no overarching skills for life strategy which acknowledges the needs and aspirations of the different groups of learners and identifies how these will be met.
38. Equal opportunities are discussed at most learning and skills meetings to explore the impact of prison wide decisions on equality. However, observations of learning sessions do not monitor adequately the promotion of equality and diversity in the curriculum. The range of programmes on offer is routinely reviewed and a new approach to providing literacy and numeracy support on vocational programmes and at work was recently introduced to remedy the fact that few UK nationals with low levels of basic skills were attending the education department.
39. The prison is aware that there is insufficient expertise amongst staff in some areas to support those learners with language needs and those with specific leaning difficulties such as dyslexia. While there are some staff trained in dyslexia awareness, not all staff are

equipped with the knowledge to support learners' diverse needs. This is particularly evident in terms of initial assessment and diagnosis and the insufficient language support in the working and training areas.

40. Staff are not using data adequately to monitor and review trends in participation, retention and achievement of different groups of learners, including those with disabilities. However, the prison had recently developed a comprehensive management information system for this purpose. Access to the library is good and learners have satisfactory access to PE, but some vocational programmes still have long waiting lists. The prison has some appropriate adaptive equipment for some learners with disabilities.

What learners like:

- Multicultural nature of the prison and the very good inter-racial relationships
- Good sense of personal responsibility and freedom
- Friendly and supportive prison officers
- Flexible approach by tutors to meet learners' needs
- 'The help I have had with my rehabilitation and the ethos to develop a healthy lifestyle'
- 'The useful explanations, hints and tips to improve my skills'
- 'Making progress so quickly'
- 'Getting hooked on reading - I never thought I'd always want to take a book with me'

What learners think could improve:

- Shortage of higher level IT courses
- Access to computers and the internet for my studies
- Frequent change in tutors - 'it can be very confusing'
- Unfair system for wages that can disadvantage prisoners opting for learning and skills
- Waiting lists for some courses