

HMP Belmarsh

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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

Description of the provider

1. HMP Belmarsh (the prison) is situated in Southeast London. It is a local prison in the high security directorate. Most offenders live in one of four house blocks. These have a particular population relating to reception/induction, life sentence offenders, vulnerable offenders and resettlement. There is a separate high security unit (HSU). The operational capacity is 918. The prison holds 120 category A offenders. About 60% of sentenced offenders are category C. In total, 549 offenders are currently on remand, some of whom may be in the prison for up to two years. There are a small number of young offenders. The prison holds about 240 foreign nationals. Just over 50% of the prison population is white. Some 70% of the offenders who have completed an initial assessment have English skills at or below entry level 3. Some 35% of the prison population stay for less than one month and 27% stay for longer than six months.
2. The prison workshops include a training workshop for construction multi-skills, a design and embroidery workshop, a brick-laying workshop and a contract workshop, typically for preparing single breakfast portions. Vulnerable offenders have their own contract workshop, mainly for stationery assembly. Vocational accreditation programmes have started in catering. Industrial cleaning courses are available. The prison has recently reintroduced horticultural work. Six accredited courses are available in physical education (PE).
3. The education provider is Lewisham College. Learners can attend education full- or part-time. There is no evening or weekend provision. Learners can attend a range of courses including information communications technology (ICT), art, music, social and life skills, literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).
4. Some learning and skills and other services are delivered in the high security unit and healthcare centre. Vulnerable offenders attend discrete learning sessions in the vulnerable offender house block or in the education centre. The prison delivers activities and learning and skills programmes in all of the seven reducing re-offending pathways.
5. About 150 learners are enrolled on programmes to support employability training, 180 learners are enrolled on programmes in literacy, numeracy and ESOL and 110 are enrolled on programmes in personal development and social integration. 198 learners attend education sessions
6. The London Advice Partnership provides information, advice and guidance (IAG). Greenwich Library and Information Services operate the prison library, which is situated within the same building as the education centre. It is open during the daytime, Monday to Friday for eight sessions. Library services are provided in the high security unit and other parts of the prison, where small collections of books are maintained and a book request system is operated.

Summary of grades awarded

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

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Satisfactory: Grade 3

7. The overall effectiveness of the provision is satisfactory. Achievement and standards and the quality of provision in employability, literacy, numeracy and ESOL and in personal development and social integration are satisfactory. Leadership and management of the provision and equality of opportunity are satisfactory.

Capacity to improve

Satisfactory: Grade 3

8. The prison has demonstrated that it is in a satisfactory position to make improvements. The overall strategies for improving and developing the prison are in place and working effectively. Since the previous inspection the education provider has changed. Many staff from the previous provider have continued in post. The process of incremental change to the learning and skills provision, identified as a strength at the previous inspection, continues, albeit that progress in some areas has been slow. Achievement of accredited qualifications, however, remains mixed with slow development of accredited ESOL courses. Teaching and learning have improved with clear quality processes in place to ensure continuous improvement and is now satisfactory. The use of individual learning plans has significantly improved, particularly in the provision of literacy. The prison has completed a comprehensive review and analysis of learners' education, training and employment and resettlement needs. Since the previous inspection the prison has introduced bricklaying and construction multi-skills courses to extend vocational training provision and improve prisoners' employability prospects.
9. The self-assessment process has developed well. Reports are critical and clearly identify strengths and areas for improvement. Over the last four years the process has reflected the changes in provision. The process uses the self-assessment of many areas of the prison which impact on learners, including PE, library and support services such as IAG provision. Staff understand the self-assessment process and can identify its importance in driving continuous improvement. The quality improvement group is active and plays a significant role in moderating the self-assessment report. Self-assessment reports are also moderated by staff from other prisons. The reports are reviewed frequently throughout the year and action-planning for improvement is rigorous. Plans link well to the overall strategic objectives for learning and skills within the prison. The report includes many of the strengths and most of the areas for improvement identified by inspectors.

Key strengths

- Good development of employability and personal and social skills
- Good progress by many learners on literacy, numeracy and ESOL learners
- Good collaborative working with partners and providers
- Good action-planning process for continuous improvement

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient range of learning and skills opportunities for some learners
- Poor punctuality and attendance
- Insufficient education training and employment information advice and guidance to meet learners' resettlement needs

Main findings

Employability training

Achievement and standards

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

10. Learners who undertake employability training develop useful and transferable skills. Staff give good guidance and support and act as good role models. Learners' behaviours and attitudes develop to the standards expected by industry. Learners in ICT develop a good understanding of the use of computers within industry and how they can use their new skills in any future business or employment. Learners value the skills they develop and look forward to using their computer skills on their release from prison to help their children. Many learners successfully complete units of study towards qualifications, although achievement of full qualifications is low.
11. Learners working in the vocational workshops get a good insight to a range of vocational skills and the standards required by industry. Learners' achievement and progress in PE are good. They develop a range of coaching and refereeing skills that are useful to them both while in custody and in the community when they are released. Learners reaching an appropriate level of skills have the opportunity to coach their peers' while undertaking gym sessions. In the contract workshop for vulnerable offenders there is a good work ethic. However, learners do not keep a record of the job ready and employability skills they develop.
12. Too much learning time is lost due to cancellations, visits, late arrival or other planned activities. This was a weakness identified at the previous inspection. The start of learning activities is often disrupted by late arrivals and too much time is wasted. Too often learners are allocated to activities that they cannot attend due to other prison or custody demands and there is little co-ordination between the prison regimes and learning and skills. Attendance is low on most programmes.

Quality of provision

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

13. Teaching and learning is satisfactory. Learners received appropriate individual coaching in ICT. Learning mentors provided adequate support to learners who needed help or have queries. The learning mentors' contribution in the sessions is not well planned and they spend too much time unoccupied. Learners keep a record of the work they have done. However, some targets in learners individual learning plans do not provide sufficient detail for them to measure the progress they are making or provide them with enough information to understand how they can improve their skills. Learning resources are satisfactory.
14. The prison has taken positive steps to increase the amount of vocational training in the workshops. Some learners do not have sufficient opportunities to develop or maintain their vocational knowledge and skills. Only 70 places are available in brickwork, construction multi-skills, industrial cleaning, ICT, design workshop and farms and gardens. The planned catering course has not yet started and the teaching area and the cookery classroom are not used. At the time of the inspection available places for some groups of learners are restricted. Category A offenders, vulnerable offenders and offenders in the HSU have limited choice. Insufficient higher level vocational education is available. Although plans have been in place for some time to offer higher level ICT qualifications,

this has yet to take place. Learners, that complete all the ICT courses available and are unable to progress, can work as support mentors in the ICT classes.

15. Learners receive satisfactory IAG about activities which will support or improve their job ready and employability skills. Support for their education, training and employment needs through to resettlement is insufficient. Learners benefit from a local ESF-funded project designed to provide a meet-at-the-gate service and help them with entering further education or training on release. The prison is working well with partners to develop a service which enables learners to enjoy the same benefits and services to seek employment as they would in the community. Learners value the support provided by the college, as the local further education college, in easing their transition through advice and guidance to vocationally relevant courses on release. Links with a range of local employers aimed at providing employment and training opportunities are good.

Literacy, numeracy and ESOL

Achievement and standards

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

16. Many learners make good progress. They quickly develop confidence and become well motivated to improve their skills. In entry level literacy programmes learners participate in challenging learning activities, which develop their skills well. In numeracy learners quickly grasp concepts they had previously found difficult to understand. Learners are proud of the progress they have made. Learners in literacy produce good standards of work. Learners' work and achievements have been celebrated through Greenwich Lifelong Learning Partnership adult learners' week awards. Many good examples of learners work are on display in classrooms.
17. Punctuality is poor. During the inspection it took up to an hour for learning sessions to settle down. Learners can choose to attend between one and 10 sessions each week. Their attendance is unpredictable. In observed learning sessions attendance rates were 60%. Where attendance is good, over recruitment onto each course often results in learners being refused access to their chosen learning sessions. These learners are reallocated to other learning sessions, which for some is inappropriate. This is disruptive to both learners and tutors. Many recent general studies and communications learning sessions have been cancelled in the HSU.
18. Achievement of qualifications is satisfactory. Attendance rates on entry level literacy programmes at 47% 67% and 65% are low but at 88% are high on numeracy programmes. Pass rates at literacy level 1 and 2 at 91% are very good, but are low on numeracy programmes.

Quality of provision

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

19. All learners are screened to assess their learning needs during an induction to the prison. Learners attending education receive a diagnostic assessment of their literacy, numeracy and ESOL needs. Staff use the diagnostic assessment of learners literacy needs well to set targets in individual learning plans at entry level. These targets are regularly monitored and reviewed to check learners' progress and to enable learners to measure their achievements. For some learners, targets are insufficiently specific and are inadequately

linked to initial assessment or adjusted at learners' progress reviews. Specialist support for learners with dyslexia is insufficient. Plans are well advanced to rectify this issue.

20. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better learning sessions, learners settle down quickly to their work and are well engaged in interesting and helpful learning activities. Tutors make good use of learning resources and a range of activities to ensure that all learners, who may be at different levels in their learning, to make appropriate progress. Learning is fun and learners are actively involved throughout the sessions. Learners are able to develop their skills with confidence, and are confident in asking questions for clarification. All learners on literacy programmes are provided with a dictionary for their personal use and tutors ensure that they are used properly. The library is responsive to the needs of ESOL learners.
21. Many learners have a wide range of capabilities. In weaker learning sessions the range of teaching and learning strategies is limited. There are insufficient differentiated learning activities. More able learners, complete their tasks quickly, and are insufficiently challenged to extend their learning and skills. Some paper-based learning resources are of low quality. Computers, purchased for use in the classrooms, are not yet operational. Staff have received initial training on the use of interactive whiteboards, but these are not yet installed. Learners receive regular assessment and review of progress. Learners receive helpful feedback on their performance in literacy.
22. The range of provision is adequate. Learners can take literacy at entry levels 1-3, communications at levels 1 and 2 and numeracy and ESOL at entry levels 1-3 and at level 1 and 2. Numeracy lessons for ESOL learners provide a helpful way of ensuring learners can master both numeracy concepts and the associated vocabulary. The college is progressing with the embedding of literacy and numeracy into training in the prison workshops. Although the Toe by Toe reading scheme is not well established, the library appropriately manages the Story Book Dads programme.
23. The college pays careful attention to ensure learner records are forwarded to prisons to which learners are transferred. Although learners receive satisfactory IAG about the courses available to them, this is not well linked to their sentence plans. Learners in the HSU do not receive a sufficiently planned induction to learning and skills or initial assessment of their needs.

Personal development and social integration

Achievement and standards

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

24. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The development of personal and social skills is good. Tutors make good use of individual learning plans to recognise and record learners targets and outcomes. Programmes such as family man and the work of the writer in residence are very effective in improving personal and social skills. Standards of work in entry level art are good. Some learners are given credit for the achievement of soft skill targets through newly introduced recording systems. Achievement of accredited programmes particularly in art is improving and is now satisfactory. Attendance in classes is erratic and learners arriving late are disruptive.

Quality of provision

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

25. Teaching and learning is good. Tutors make good use of a good range of teaching methods to ensure good learning and learners' involvement in learning sessions. Staff are skilled in using a range of methods particularly in music and art. The teaching and learning in music is excellent. The college has recently introduced systems for recognising and recording progression and achievement. It is being well used in a few areas. However, many of the targets set are insufficiently specific or related to the time learners have to complete their studies. Resources are satisfactory but the library area used for creative writing is inadequate.
26. The range of programmes is satisfactory. The provision has increased in the last few months with the introduction of a programme in personal and social development. Links with other sections of the prison are new and improving. For example, the family man programme now links with physical education to develop aspects of the healthy living programme. Offenders are encouraged to use their developing social skills to move onto other learning activities often supported by prison officers. Over 400 offenders each week attend a wide range of different faith programmes in the chaplaincy with good learning opportunities but links with education are limited. Some 40 learners are undertaking distance learning programmes. The quality and provision of this in-cell learning on the residential wings is inadequate. Little learning is taking place. Learning plans are poor and records of learning activities are inadequate. Although improved since the previous inspection, prison records show that only 37% of the main prison population access the library to support their learning and skills.

Leadership and management

Satisfactory: Grade 3

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

27. Leadership and management of learning and skills within the prison are satisfactory. Effective strategic planning is an integral part of the development of the prison's learning and skills provision. A comprehensive resettlement needs analysis and a local area wide consultation on employment opportunities has led to a review of education and skills and the further development of the learning and skills provision. Good collaboration and communication has contributed to a strong relationship between Lewisham College and the prison. This has enabled links and access to the college's employment projects. Further developments are planned to increase the range of learning and skills interventions available to learners, for example, Camden Garden Centre and Driving Standards Agency courses related to driving offences.
28. Changes to the offender core day have been implemented to improve access to activities. Progress towards the introduction of accredited learning and skills provision has been slow in some areas. Staff responsible for identifying learners' interventions through the sentence planning process have recently taken up their posts and are effectively developing a range of interventions. However, the work has yet to be fully integrated.
29. The prison has worked well with the college and other key internal and external partners to develop self-assessment and action-planning processes. The self-assessment reports are regularly reviewed and thoroughly evaluated. Action plan targets are systematically and

clearly articulated in the prison business plans. They are regularly monitored at senior staff level. The self-assessment process is well established and inclusive and the reports are critical. All key activities such as PE, library and the workshops are included in the self-assessment and action-planning process. Clear actions and targets for improvement identified in current improvement plans are linked to the strengths and weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. The college and the prison have worked hard to improve the quality of provision, including the quality of teaching and learning. This is now satisfactory. Work remains to improve the provision further. The prison has supported the college effectively to minimise disruption to staff and learners and the college has responded well working with the prison to increase the range of provision. Teaching staff feel more comfortable in the prison environment and are well supported by college tutors, often on an individual basis. Senior college staff are frequent visitors.

30. Equality of opportunity in learning and skills is satisfactory. The prison has significantly increased its ESOL provision. Remand offenders are able to access work and education and a recent pay review has identified a standard rate of pay which is equitable across activities. This is shortly to be introduced. Training in equality and diversity for learning and skills staff is satisfactory. Many college staff have attended diversity training in the prison. College staff attend race equality action team meetings and the ESOL co-ordinator attends foreign national group meetings. Teaching staff have all undergone suicide and self-harm awareness training. Equality and diversity is frequently celebrated, for example, Diversity week in HMP Belmarsh and the Help Belmarsh Prison Stamp Out Racism scheme. In many learning sessions good use is made of opportunities to discuss cultural issues. Race equality monitoring is well established in the prison and impact assessments have started to be carried out, which have included learning and skills. Foreign national house block and reception representatives work well with prisoners and prison staff to maintain good communications. The immigration service offer frequent clinics to support foreign national learners. The college has taken the criteria for Every Child Matters (ECM) and clearly identified aspects of provision which reflect the criteria, although this has yet to extend to all learning and skills in the prison.
31. The provision of learning and skills is insufficient for some learners. In the HSU there is no routine initial assessment of all learners' needs and the curriculum is insufficiently planned to meet learners' needs. Vulnerable learners also have limited access to learning and skills. Learners are only able to access courses in the main education centre for six sessions per week, and other provision is available in the vulnerable offenders unit. There are insufficient arrangements to meet the needs of prisoners serving long sentences and young offenders. There is limited access to some areas in the main education centre for those with mobility difficulties. Learning and skills does not feature specifically in the Strategy for Foreign Nationals. The library is not included as part of the prison and learning and skills induction process and those in full-time employment in workshops do not have sufficient access.
32. Punctuality and attendance by learners at work and education activities is poorly managed. Regime practices vary considerably in managing the process of getting learners to the various activities. Attendance is often low. When attendance is good in education, class participation operates on a first come first served basis. When an appropriate number of learners have entered the class, those arriving later are turned away and directed to other classes which may or may not be their second choice. There is no process to decide who should or should not attend sessions when they are full or over subscribed.

33. Effective IAG is offered to learners. However, IAG to support the education, training and employment resettlement pathway is insufficient to meet the needs of most learners who require the service. One member of London Advice Partnership's staff has been allocated two days a week on site for IAG support. This is shortly scheduled to increase to four days. Although learners who receive it get good support, for many it is inaccessible. The preparation for release programme provided by Lewisham College is working well and the support from internal and external agencies for aspects such as benefits, drugs and alcohol and job search is effective. However, the provision for finance and debt management is limited. The prison is aware of this and has identified a finance literacy programme which will be introduced in the near future.

What learners like:

- ‘A chance to learn and try something I have not done before’
- ‘The new challenges in learning and a chance to build my confidence’
- ‘Education helps me fill my time’
- ‘The help I get from teachers – the helpful explanations which make learning easy’
- ‘The Family Man course – now I know what my family is going through’
- ‘It is a lot better in here than I thought it would be’

What learners think could improve:

- ‘The opportunity to attend education every day to practise my new English skills’
- ‘Access to PE for those who attend education full time: I have sacrificed the gym to attend education’
- ‘Make my learning sessions more challenging’
- ‘Better access to the library’
- ‘More to do – I have done all the ICT courses’