

INSPECTION REPORT

HMP & YOI Chelmsford

12 August 2002



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's **learnirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- learning and job preparation programmes funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Overall judgement

In those cases where the overall judgement is that the provision is adequate, only those aspects of the provision which are less than satisfactory will be reinspected.

Provision will normally be deemed to be inadequate where:

- more than one third of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

This provision will be subject to a full reinspection.

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. A statement as to whether the provision is adequate or not is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Her Majesty's Prison Chelmsford is a Category B local prison and a Young Offenders' Institute in Chelmsford, Essex. The prison has an operational capacity of 576 prisoners. There are 568 prisoners, including young offenders and 275 unconvicted or unsentenced prisoners. The education provision is contracted to a college of further education, which provides part-time and full-time education to prisoners. There are courses in social and life skills, basic/key work skills, art, and information and communications technology. There is also a charitable trust providing pre-release programmes, based in the prison. There are no vocational qualifications offered, although there are production workshop facilities, which include textiles, wheelchair and cycle restoration, and light assembly work. Only information and communications technology, and foundation programmes were inspected.

Overall judgement

The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Foundation programmes are unsatisfactory, as is the prison's approach to equality of opportunity and quality assurance. The education provision in information and communications technology is satisfactory.

KEY STRENGTHS

- good progression towards achievement of learning objectives in information and communications technology programmes
- excellent pre-release training programme

KEY WEAKNESSES

- no strategic planning to manage all aspects of education and training
- poor awareness of equal opportunities issues among staff and learners
- insufficient access to education and library resources
- no quality assurance framework for monitoring the quality of education and training
- no structured basic skills support outside education classes
- unsatisfactory numeracy provision

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more effective promotion of education and training activities
- better analysis and use of learners' feedback
- more comprehensive education induction
- increased training provision of English for learners who speak it as an additional language

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of four inspectors and one observer spent a total of 20 days at Her Majesty's Prison (HMP) and Young Offenders' Institute (YOI) Chelmsford in August 2002. They visited the production workshops, kitchens, library, physical education (PE) and education department and interviewed 45 learners. Inspectors also interviewed 41 teaching staff, prison managers and other staff. A wide range of documents was reviewed, including learners' personal files, portfolios of evidence, records of meetings, policies and correspondence. Thirteen learning sessions were observed.

2. HMP and YOI Chelmsford completed its first self-assessment reports in May 2002. They were prepared using the 'Common Inspection Framework' and covered all of the activities in the prison. The education department carries out self-assessment for the college of further education annually. The externally managed foundation training provider also carries out its own self-assessment annually. An action plan was provided.

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

3. HMP Chelmsford is a Category B local prison and a Young Offenders' Institute in Chelmsford, Essex. The prison has 568 prisoners and an operational capacity of 576. Prisoners include young offenders and 275 unconvicted and unsentenced prisoners on remand. Approximately 60 prisoners are from minority ethnic groups and 84 prisoners are foreign nationals.

4. The prison contracts with a college of further education and a charitable trust for the education provision. The trust provides a six-week full-time programme for up to 14 prisoners (approximately 120 places each year) and the main education department provides around 10,000 teaching hours annually.

5. The prison's Head of Resettlement and Activities (HRA) is responsible for education, training and work activities. The education department has a full-time education manager and 12 training staff. One member of staff is a qualified counsellor and is responsible for the induction of new prisoners into education, carrying out national skills training agency assessments, and the planning of individual learning programmes. There is one administrator and a part-time member of staff, who provide clerical support to the department.

6. The education department provides training and education in art, mathematics, basic skills, information and communications technology (ICT), and a small number of social and life skills programmes, including cookery. The main focus is on English language training. No formal training or qualifications are offered in connection with the kitchens, works department, laundry, PE, or the production workshops. There is no formal or structured key skills provision within the prison.

Education and training in prison

7. The inspectors observed 13 teaching and learning sessions and 85 per cent were judged to be satisfactory or better. Some were very good and a few were exceptionally good. Two classes were unsatisfactory. The standard of written and practical work was considered good in most cases. Health and safety practice in the workshops is satisfactory, although the lighting in some workshops is insufficient and the working areas small. There are good opportunities for learners to develop skills in the workshops, when they are open, but competences are not recorded, only attendance. Mainly young offenders use the workshops, with a small number of adult prisoners. Vulnerable prisoners are given work in the laundry, which is not accredited.

8. While national vocational qualifications (NVQs) were previously available in the kitchens and PE section, they are no longer available to learners due to staff changes and shortages, although PE staff are enthusiastic and provide national sports and sports leadership awards. However, there has been a significant number of recent developments that have not had any effect on the learning environment yet, including the restructuring of responsibilities and the appointment of new staff. The education department's staff are well qualified. Education staff have begun to cross-reference areas of work against key skills, but this is still in the development stage.

9. There are insufficient data on retention and achievement rates routinely available to senior prison staff, but the trust responsible for the pre-release programme, and the education department, do keep records of attendance and learners' progress through their learning plans. Attendance is poor when classes are managed on adult wings, because learners prefer to attend the education department, as this increases their contact with other learners. Learners can access up to eight classes each week, but this is restricted to two classes each week for vulnerable prisoners.

10. Although occupancy rates and interruptions to classes are monitored, for contract reasons the focus is on prison service regulations and activities, such as time out of cell. The education department rarely meets its targets for occupancy of classes, although retention rates are high in the pre-release programme. There are no evening classes available to learners and access to the library depends on the prison regime's activities. Access to classes for learners with limited mobility is poor, because most of the classes offered in the education block are on the first floor, with the exception of some information technology (IT) classes, literacy class, and the pre-release programme.

11. The library is provided by the local county council. While access to the library is good, as it is located on the ground floor, it is small and there is little space for learners to work. Staffing levels in the library are low, but library staff are experienced and motivated. They are particularly knowledgeable about equal opportunities issues. However, the library is not meeting the needs of learners. With the exception of those on the pre-release programme, the IT resources are poor and in need of repair or replacement, particularly on the adult wings.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

12. The leadership and management of education and training in the prison are unsatisfactory. The prison's HRA is responsible for education, training and work activities, as well as managing the contract for education and for library services. The prison has not treated education and training as a priority, but has focused on the requirements of the prison service and key performance targets. The position of HRA was created only recently and the HRA had only been in the position for one week before the inspection. The education department has a full-time education manager and 12 training staff, four of whom, including the head of education, are responsible for co-ordinating the curriculum.

13. The education contract, which is with a further education college, is for approximately 10,000 teaching hours annually. The prison's education department provides basic skills training and a core programme of art, mathematics, ICT, and a small number of social and life skills programmes, including cookery, but the main focus is on English language training. The prison also has workshops, where prisoners are employed to repair and maintain bicycles and wheelchairs. However, training in the workshops is not accredited formally. Some prisoners are also employed in other areas of the prison, such as the laundry and the kitchen. No external qualifications are offered in these areas, although prisoners working in the kitchen complete an in-house training programme on basic food hygiene. These prisoners receive a certificate, which is approved by a national awarding body. The prison's wage structure does not disadvantage those prisoners attending education and training rather than working. The prison provides a co-ordinated pre-release programme, with strong links to external agencies, to ensure that prisoners have the maximum support before release in order to reduce the proportion of prisoners re-offending.

14. The prison has an equal opportunities policy and the further education college also has a policy that applies to the education department in the prison. The deputy governor is responsible for equality of opportunity in the prison. There is no prison quality assurance policy or procedures to monitor the quality of education and training. The prison was accredited as an Investor in People this year, which is a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. The education department carried out its second self-assessment before this inspection and a separate self-assessment was carried out by the charitable trust responsible for the pre-release programme.

STRENGTHS

- effective monitoring of learners' progress

WEAKNESSES

- no strategic planning to manage all aspects of education and training
- delayed action to deal with previously identified issues
- poor awareness of equal opportunities issues among staff and learners
- insufficient access to education and library resources
- no quality assurance framework for monitoring the quality of education and training

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better analysis and use of learners' feedback
- more effective promotion of education and training activities
- more comprehensive education induction

15. The education department has a well-developed, computerised monitoring system, which informs staff of learners' progress and development. This system is also capable of monitoring staff training and additional information. Other organisations responsible for education and training in the prison have their own clearly recorded documents to monitor learners' progress. There are separate procedures for monitoring learners' achievements, which are easy to understand and analyse. Learners are asked to complete feedback questionnaires at the end of each course and after induction, but this information is not anonymous and the results are not easy to analyse. Although some analysis is made of the results, this information is not used routinely to help improve the training provision.

16. The recently created position of HRA has not yet resulted in a formal and detailed strategic plan. Although the further education college has developed a strategic plan for the education department, this does not identify clearly the education and training needs of the prison. Since each organisation operates independently and has its own approach and procedures to develop courses and the curriculum, there is no cohesive approach to education and training and some overlap of training provision, which confuses the learners. The organisations involved in education and training at the prison focus on the achievement of key performance targets set by the prison service and work mostly in isolation. There has recently been an attempt to bring together all the agencies involved in education and training at the prison with monthly multi-agency meetings. These meetings have focused on what each agency can offer and not on the development of an integrated and cohesive strategy for the training and resettlement of prisoners. Although individual organisations often promote their courses and training programmes at induction, this information is not reinforced clearly after this. There is no co-ordinated approach to the promotion of education and training, and there are too few notices throughout the prison to stimulate interest.

17. An action plan was developed to deal with issues identified during the last prison inspection in 2001, but action to rectify key weaknesses has been slow. For example,

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there has been no systematic approach developed to accredit learners' prior experience and learning, and there has been slow development of NVQs or equivalent programmes. The production workshops do employ prisoners, but there is no training for work in these areas. In addition to the issues highlighted through inspection, the prison has carried out a needs analysis to provide a clearer understanding of learners' needs and requirements. The results of this analysis have not been dealt with fully. The education department carried out its second self-assessment before inspection and a separate self-assessment was carried out by the charitable trust responsible for the six-week pre-release programmes. There were insufficient key issues identified in the prison self-assessment report for education and training in the prison.

Equality of opportunity

18. Equality of opportunity is unsatisfactory. The prison has a standard equal opportunities policy, which is used for learners within the education and training sector. The brochure, which details the education curriculum, contains a brief equal opportunities statement written by the further education college. Equal opportunities is not reinforced during induction or throughout the learning programmes. The prison does not collect and analyse data routinely on the number of foreign nationals, or those from minority ethnic groups, to help develop the curriculum. The prison provides some training for learners who speak English as an additional language, but this is limited to work within general English classes. There are no separate English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes and there is a reliance on other learners to provide language support. There are insufficient dictionaries for foreign nationals, or those from minority ethnic groups. Some of the education classes are held on the first floor of the education block and residential wings, which are not suitable for learners with mobility difficulties. There are examples of racist graffiti on the walls of some of the education classrooms and the issue of racial discrimination is not challenged by staff, or used to promote discussion.

19. One of the prison's governors is responsible for equal opportunities but has yet to complete diversity training. The prison does not keep records of equal opportunities training for education staff and there is no structured equal opportunities training for staff responsible for education and training within the prison. Prisoners include re-offenders, those on remand and those recently convicted. The choice of education programmes is limited. On arrival at the prison, all receive a brief education induction, which includes an introduction to the education programmes and employment opportunities, and a basic skills assessment. Although the results of the basic skills assessment are sometimes collected and placed in learners' files, they are not communicated to tutors routinely and additional assessments are then carried out in the areas of learning. In some cases, where learners have attended prison before, the results of previous assessments are used. Six to eight weeks after induction there is a planning session with a member of the education staff who is a trained counsellor. Participation in education and training programmes is then dependent on availability of places and can be delayed as long as two to three weeks. There is insufficient access to library resources for many learners, which is often dependent on regime priorities. There is unequal access to education and training programmes. Young offenders and adults can attend up to eight sessions each week, while vulnerable prisoners only have access to two sessions.

Quality assurance

20. Quality assurance is unsatisfactory. The prison does not have a quality assurance policy or procedures to monitor the quality of education and training within the prison. There is an over-reliance on external agencies' quality assurance arrangements. Areas of good practice are not shared between external agencies or with the prison. There is no routine sharing or monitoring of information by the prison from quality assurance checks made by the subcontractors.

21. At the time of inspection, the prison had not introduced a quality improvement committee, which is a requirement of the Prisoners' Learning & Skills Unit (PLSU). The quality assurance arrangements are concerned mainly with contract compliance and the monitoring of prison service key performance targets.

22. Self-assessment is new to some areas of the prison, but was carried out using the 'Common Inspection Framework'. The self-assessment report did not adequately describe the areas of learning, and provided few evaluative statements, particularly for leadership and management.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Information & communications technology

23. Training in ICT is satisfactory. The area of learning is co-ordinated by the acting education manager, who normally has responsibility for ICT co-ordination as a team leader. There are currently three part-time members of staff who provide training in ICT. All team members are qualified to teach within education, and two are qualified as assessors. One member of staff has postgraduate qualifications in computer studies, and another has an advanced diploma in computer applications. There are 36 learners, of whom 13 are full time and 23 are part time. Most full-time learners are adults. Thirty-three learners are working towards level 1 qualifications and three towards a level 2 qualification accredited by OCR. Most learners also take other subjects within their educational programmes and attend ICT training in the education centre, which has a suite of computers to accommodate nine learners. A small group of adult learners attends IT training on their wing in a room with seven computers available. Course programmes in ICT vary from two and a half hours to 18 hours per week. Before starting a course, learners attend a planning session with a guidance worker, to agree their subject areas and a timetable of classes. At this meeting, basic skills in English and mathematics are discussed. Between two and nine weeks after this meeting learners begin their full-time training programme. When necessary, arrangements are made for learners to attend other sessions as an interim measure.

STRENGTHS

- good achievement rate
- good individual training support for learners

WEAKNESSES

- no unit accreditation of the computer literacy qualification
- insufficient opportunities for progression into further ICT training
- insufficient learning resources

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more thorough recording of checks on the quality of tutors' assessments made by assessors

24. Tutors maintain detailed records of learners' progress, which show clearly the rapid progress that learners make towards achieving their learning objectives. Progress is

monitored easily by showing the dates that modules are achieved and recording the exercises and exams taken. Results of continuous assessment are maintained in well-structured learners' files. Results for each group are displayed on the walls of each training room, which ensures that learners are aware of their own progress and what is required to progress further. This motivates learners and increases their interest. There are systems to monitor the quality of tutors' assessments, but the results of checks are not recorded adequately and external verifier reports are not maintained consistently.

25. Tutors are very flexible in response to the diverse abilities of learners. They quickly establish learners' previous experience in ICT. Group sizes are small and rarely exceed seven learners. Tutors provide good individual instruction, are enthusiastic, and develop an atmosphere that is conducive to learning. Tutors have a wide range of qualifications and specialist experience in their subject areas, and many years' teaching experience with diverse ability ranges. Tutors adapt training programmes to establish the most appropriate learning plan for each learner. Where learners are at a higher level than the accredited courses available, tutors aim to provide higher-level training and course material. Most of the training observed is good and the remainder satisfactory.

26. The education centre does not accredit learners who achieve only part of a qualification and many learners leave education without any certificates to prove their effort and achievements. Most learners make substantial progress towards achieving full qualifications but because of budgetary constraints within the education department, these are not accredited by module. Learners are often unable to prove their competence to potential employers on leaving prison. Figures showing full achievement of qualifications do not reflect accurately the true achievements of learners. The population of learners is transient, with many learners moving out of education at short notice. From April 2002, 106 learners started training and, of those, 36 are still in learning and 20 gained a level 1 qualification in computer literacy. No learners have achieved the business technology qualification at level 2 in ICT.

27. Accreditation by the OCR in ICT is offered at level 1 and level 2. There are no qualification routes available above level 2. Tutors try to provide resources for learners with higher-level abilities, which gives some learners the opportunity to further develop their skills. However, these activities are not accredited and some learners are unaware of this. Tutors try to help learners, but none has specific specialist knowledge or the resources to develop practical skills in applying the knowledge gained. Learners gain skills to level 3 in key skills, but these are not accredited formally.

28. There are insufficient learning resources to ensure that all learners have the same quality of experience within ICT. Learning materials are restricted to the bare minimum required by the syllabus of the qualification. There are not enough opportunities for learners to practise their skills by carrying out exercises they would encounter in a real working environment. The ICT training centre is in the middle of a reorganisation and resources are disorganised. There are few learning resources to support learners with specific learning needs, such as ESOL or reading difficulties. Resources are largely text-based with few graphical images. Teaching staff do not have sufficient preparation time

to develop courses. Computer equipment is not consistent between the two training locations. The equipment used on the prison wings is old and unreliable, and the software is outdated. In some instances, learning materials do not match the version of software operated. Tutors working on the prison wing do not have access to a photocopier, which limits resources available to learners. The education department is waiting for the refurbishment of the computer equipment through the prison computer contract, but there is no deadline. ICT training is over-subscribed, with 18 learners waiting to attend courses. The education department has changed the timetable recently in an attempt to make wider provision of ICT training available by providing training on the prison wings. However, staffing levels are insufficient to meet the needs of all those who request ICT training or to ensure that all categories of prisoners have equal access to training. There are not enough staff to cover absences and some classes are either reduced or cancelled.

Good Practice

Financial incentives provide learners with the motivation to progress and take qualifications. Learners are given additional sums of money for good work, passing modules and for entering and passing examinations.

Foundation programmes

29. The foundation education training provision is unsatisfactory. The main provision is contracted to a college of further education with an additional contract for pre-release training given to a registered charity. Fifty-two learners receive full-time education and a further 63 learners are in part-time education. On average, 21 per cent of the prison's population are engaged in education programmes. Initial assessment takes place during the education induction, which is part of the prison's induction programme. All prisoners meet with a specialist guidance worker from the education department, who briefly describes the range of opportunities available. Prisoners who wish to take up education meet later with the guidance worker to determine the most appropriate timetable, so that applications for specific courses can be made.

30. Fifty-one per cent of foundation provision is basic skills. Learners requiring ESOL courses are integrated with the English classes. The short, full-time pre-release course, which focuses on jobsearch, job application and generic employment skills, makes up 22 per cent of the training provision. A further 22 per cent of the provision is given to social and life skills, most of which is cooking. There are 10 art classes a week, though these classes were not part of the scope of the inspection. There is no evening training provision. There is a main education centre in which there are three general classrooms, a training kitchen and art room, one specialist ICT room and the room for the pre-release training course. There are two classrooms in each of the adult wings in which basic skills, social and life skills and ICT training are provided. These are also used for individual planning sessions. Young offenders attend classes in the education centre. Cookery and art classes take place in the education centre for both adult and young learners. Vulnerable prisoners attend separate classes in the education centre for two sessions each week. Education is provided by 12 staff, including a qualified guidance specialist.

STRENGTHS

- good teaching on most training programmes
- good individual action-planning and monitoring of learners' progress
- excellent pre-release training programme

WEAKNESSES

- limited range of training programmes
- inadequate learning resources
- no structured basic skills support outside education classes
- poorly resourced numeracy training provision

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- increase ESOL training provision
- better use of classroom wall space

31. All courses have appropriate accreditation and most learners who complete training do achieve their qualifications. In the three months before inspection, 22 NVQs at level 1 in mathematics and English were achieved and 32 NVQs at level 2. The retention rate of basic skill classes is good. Other than in classes where students had numeracy needs, the quality of teaching observed was satisfactory, and in 50 per cent of classes was very good or outstanding. Teaching is well planned and meets the individual needs of learners. In a mathematics class, a new student received a thorough diagnostic assessment, which led to specific targets being set which were then recorded on the learner's personal record card. This card also acts as a monitoring and review record, so that progress against the targets can be assessed readily and new targets set as appropriate. This comprehensive and effective system is used throughout the basic skills provision. Where group teaching was observed, the pace was lively with enthusiastic contributions from the learners. Supportive staff/learner relationships exist throughout.

32. There is an excellent six-week course operated by the charity, which focuses on preparation for release, employability skills and jobsearch. A multi-agency approach, led by an enthusiastic staff team, involves the careers service, probation service, and various external agencies. Learners, primarily young offenders, also learn basic ICT skills and, where appropriate, the driving licence theory test. The course's base room is very well equipped and welcoming. Feedback from learners is positive, with clear evidence that the course makes a real difference to their future opportunities.

33. The range of training available to learners is restricted. Other than limited mathematics and English opportunities, there are few courses above NVQ at level 2. There is no separate ESOL provision, although such learners who do access mainstream English classes make satisfactory progress. In 2002, 10 out of 11 learners achieved an ESOL qualification at basic or elementary level. No formal analysis of the ESOL needs of the 85 foreign national prisoners has been carried out. Key skills qualifications are not offered, despite the pilot cross-referencing of level 1 skills in the social and life skills programme and in the art classes. There is no specific basic numeracy provision. The focus on the achievement of NVQs at level 2 in English and mathematics has restricted the development of entry-level provision, as well as curtailing level 3 NVQ courses and programmes aimed at personal and social development.

34. Learning resources are inadequate. Learning materials in both basic skills and social and life skills programmes are poor. Handouts are of variable quality, with some material photocopied from textbooks, while others are typed in a variety of fonts and sizes or handwritten. There is no house style, which gives learners' portfolios a disjointed and unco-ordinated presentation that does not necessarily reflect the quality of their content.

Only one computer is available to support basic skills learning, and that is on an adult wing of the prison. Learners do not benefit from the ICT resources. In particular, the comprehensive range of ICT equipment available to support the new basic skills national curriculum is not accessed by most learners. The shortage of full-time teaching staff prevents effective curriculum and learning resource development.

35. There is no structured basic skills support outside the education classes. Although an innovative reading support scheme is in operation on two wings of the prison, there is no effective monitoring or linking back to the literacy learning carried out in the education department. No basic skills support is available in the workshops, kitchen or other work areas. Although this weakness is recognised by the management and there are plans to rectify it, prisoners who do not access education classes do not receive effective basic skills support.

36. The training provision for those with basic numeracy needs is unsatisfactory. Staff teaching mathematics have no qualifications in teaching numeracy. The only learning resources available are paper-based and require basic literacy skills. There are no measuring jugs to demonstrate volumes, no scales for weights, or coins for work with money. No relevant, real-life exercises are carried out. The initial screening test results show that 26 per cent of prisoners have basic numeracy needs. There is neither the staffing expertise nor equipment resources to meet these needs within the education department. A member of staff employed by the charity has relevant numeracy qualifications, but this skill is not used within the education department.

37. Classrooms are a good size, have comfortable furniture and are well decorated. However, very little use is made of the available display space on classroom and corridor walls in order to create a stimulating learning environment. For example, there is very little student work on display.