

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **HMP Birmingham**

**21 October 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

HMP Birmingham is a local category B prison for men situated two miles from the city centre. The prison dates from Victorian times, although additions and refurbishments took place in the 1990s. A major expansion of the prison is currently underway, designed to improve the standard of regime for prisoners. All inspectors visited the prison as part of an unannounced inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons. At the time of the inspection, the balance of remand/on trail prisoners to convicted/sentenced prisoners was the opposite to the usual proportions, at around 66 per cent and 33 per cent respectively. Inspection included the provision in education, workshops, physical education and industrial cleaning. At the time, the prison was at full capacity, with 930 prisoners, with another 140 prisoners in police cells because of the excessively high numbers. The prison education department offers sessions in basic literacy, numeracy and information technology, creative arts, cultural studies, personal development and English for speakers of other languages. The prison has a new library area. Some education sessions are held on the prison's residential wings. The prison has large workshops for packaging and textiles. Prisoners also work in the laundry, kitchen, servery, and stores. No accredited training is offered in these workshops. Training leading to qualifications is offered in industrial cleaning and in physical education.

### Overall judgement

The proportion of prisoners participating in education and training is poor. The leadership and management of the provision is inadequate, although major reorganisation of management roles is about to take place. The provision of education is satisfactory for those who are able to participate. The education programme is well managed and monitored by the staff of the contracted college. The range of work activities is inadequate to meet the reasonable needs of prisoners and insufficient accreditation of learning is carried out.

### KEY STRENGTHS

- well-managed education provision
- excellent library facility
- good links with other departments to support basic skills
- effective tutorial system
- particularly productive relationships between staff and learners
- satisfactory or better teaching in most education sessions
- good industrial cleaning
- good training in sport, recreation and leisure

### **KEY WEAKNESSES**

- lost teaching time for education
- missed opportunities to accredit learning
- too few prisoners participating in education and training
- inadequate arrangements for quality assurance of the provision
- poor range of resources in sport and recreation
- inadequate planning and record-keeping in some lessons
- lack of breaks during long teaching sessions

### **OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

- better internal verification procedures in sport
- better IT resources

## THE INSPECTION

1. Four inspectors spent a total of 13 days at HMP Birmingham in October 2002. The ALI's team accompanied a team of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) inspectors. There were significant staff absences at the prison, including the prison governor, the head of activities and education, and the head of personnel. The deputy governor and the education deputy manager returned from leave for the inspection. Inspectors visited all prison workshops, the physical education (PE) unit, the industrial cleaning unit, the education block, kitchens, laundry and the library. They observed 10 learning sessions and interviewed many learners and available members of prison and college staff. Inspectors examined individual learning plans, minutes of meetings, schemes of work and the prison's recent self-assessment report and its associated action plan, which was produced in May 2002.

## THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

### Context

2. HMP Birmingham is a local category B prison for men, situated two miles from the city centre. At the time of the inspection, the prison was at full capacity, with 930 prisoners, with another 140 prisoners in police cells because of the excessively high numbers. The proportion of remand/prisoners on trail to convicted/sentenced prisoners, at 66 per cent and 33 per cent respectively, was the opposite to usual at Birmingham. This imbalance had a significant effect on the workings of the prison, especially as remand/prisoners on trail, who have access to private finances, have much less incentive to join in activities than convicted/sentenced prisoners. During the week of inspection, the vulnerable prisoner unit of 180 prisoners was changing residential wings to the other side of the prison. This disrupted 360 prisoners and affected attendance at education and training activities. The participation rate in education is 18 per cent and in activities it is 20 per cent. Of the learners participating in activities, 50 work between the kitchen and servery, 21 in the laundry, 35 in the packing workshop and 50 in textiles. Since the demolition of the painting and decorating workshop, no accredited training has taken place, although 12 prisoners are involved in projects around the prison. One-hundred and sixty-six learners attend the education unit and an additional 99 are involved in education elsewhere in the prison.

### Education and training in prison

3. The prison education department offers a good range of courses, including classes in basic literacy, numeracy and information technology (IT). There are also classes in creative arts, cultural studies, personal development and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). A good library has recently been opened and the rate of lending is increasing. Some education sessions are held on the prison's residential wings. The prison has workshops for packaging and textiles. Prisoners also work in the laundry, kitchens, servery, and stores. No accredited training is offered in these workshops. The industrial cleaning training is good, as is that in physical education. During the inspection, a survey of prisoners' responses was made. Ninety-four per cent of respondents who participate in education thought that the provision is very good or good.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

4. Until the end of October 2002, a head of inmate activities managed all aspects of education and training on behalf of the Prison Service. New arrangements have been made to divide responsibility by appointing a head of activities, and a head of resettlement, who take up post on 1st November 2002. At the time of the unannounced inspection, the new postholders were on leave and not available for interview. The head of activities manages the work training offered and the activities in the education department. The recently appointed deputy head of activities is making links with the local community and industry to determine factors that might influence the training given in the new workshops that are planned. The new workshops are part of an extensive programme of building work, due to open in October 2003, which will double the prison's size and significantly improve the education and training opportunities.

5. Education provision is contracted to a local further education college and is one of nine such contracts held by the college. An education manager, supported by a deputy, leads a department of 3.6 equivalent full-time teachers and 18 sessional or part-time staff. Seventeen of the staff are qualified teachers, of whom five are in the second year of in-service training for a further education teachers' certificate or a certificate in education. One teacher is qualified to teach ESOL and another has almost finished an initial certificate in the teaching of ESOL.

### STRENGTHS

- well-managed education department
- excellent library facility

### WEAKNESSES

- lack of routine sentence planning for prisoners
- inadequate cover for tutors' absence
- lost education teaching time
- missed opportunities to accredit learning
- few prisoners receive opportunity to undertake education and training
- inadequate arrangements for quality assurance of the provision

### OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- adjustment of prison management staff to new roles
- restoration of accredited training in the workshop areas

6. The provision of education is satisfactory for those who receive it. The education

staff link well with other prison departments. Communication between staff is particularly effective in supporting vulnerable prisoners. Good links with workshops and the PE department help learners to develop basic and key skills alongside other work or leisure activities. Activities to help learners improve their literacy, numeracy and language skills match closely the interests of learners. Learners attending education develop new computer skills which they use to present their written assignments. An outreach tutor gives similar support to learners in workshops, in the health care centre and on the drugs rehabilitation programme. Prisoners on the vulnerable prisoner unit have helpful, structured tuition and good study packs to use in their cells. Good links with the suicide prevention officer helps to ensure that prisoners' needs are quickly identified. This officer also manages a prison listeners' scheme. Some prisoners are being trained by education staff to become reading partners for non-readers on the wings, but progress on training these prisoners is slow. However, when listeners are required on the wing, their own training is interrupted. At the time of inspection, only two of the eight listeners were available for that week's class. When lock-outs take place the education department is not routinely notified and the gap is disruptive to learners' progress. A review of ESOL provision is being carried out to rectify problems of location and need within the prison.

7. Appraisal of staff in the education department is effectively managed by the college's education manager and linked to staff development. Staff are encouraged to broaden their skills and many of them are training to teach literacy and numeracy. Observations of teaching take place at least once a year and new staff are monitored and observed frequently during their first three months of employment. Schemes of work and course files are held centrally and routinely checked by the education manager. All staff are qualified teachers and their personal files hold detailed job descriptions. At the time of inspection, there were staff shortages due to unfilled vacancies and staff sickness. Some tutors were required to cover classes at short notice and the quality of presentations reflected the lack of time for preparation.

8. The library is provided by Birmingham Libraries service and was refurbished recently. It has a stock of 18,000 titles, managed by three qualified staff and four orderlies. The library, which has modern furniture, is light, attractive and welcoming with good displays of books, videos, magazines, open learning packs and other media. A reading group with a maximum size of 10 learners meets weekly for two hours. The library accommodates up to 20 learners at any one time. However, the facilities are located away from the education department and learners can lose around 45 minutes of their sessions getting to and from the library. Formal links between the two sections are infrequent and there is little sharing of information to ensure that support opportunities are maximised, although library staff are well represented on various prison committees and contribute effectively to activities elsewhere in the prison. No computer link is provided to the central library service in the city. Requests by learners for materials not currently in stock are met by obtaining them from other library sources. No formal surveys are carried out to help understand learners' tastes and preferences, although some informal discussions are held.



**Equality of opportunity**

9. The approach to equal opportunities for education and training is poor. The proportion of learners participating in education and training is particularly low, with only 28 per cent of the prison population being involved in education and 20 per cent in work activities. The prison has an equal opportunities policy and a race relations policy that is widely displayed throughout the prison. Most learners are unaware of any appeals or grievance procedure related to their qualifications. The library provides good materials to help with literacy and numeracy training and titles are stocked in 14 different languages. A full range of reference, educational and information books is available, as well as a much-used legal section. Induction is conducted on the wings, but only half of the new prisoners had been seen by the education department. Induction is confined to giving learners a test to determine their literacy and numeracy levels and providing brief leaflets about what is available in the education department. There is no opportunity to talk with learners privately, save at cell doors, so this part of the process is left until learners join an education class. Once in the department, learners are given another assessment to determine their suitability for specific courses and key skills. When several learners are in the room at the same time, there is little opportunity for confidentiality.

### **Quality assurance**

10. The arrangements for quality assurance of the provision are inadequate. There is no overall framework of arrangements across education, vocational training and training for work. Quality assurance procedures are not applied to activities in the vocational training and training for work areas. However, the subcontracting education manager effectively monitors the work of the education department on a daily basis. Quarterly monitoring meetings to review contract compliance are attended by the head of the prison division, faculty head of the college, the education manager, a representative from Prisons Learning and Skills Unit (PLSU) and the head of regimes for the prison. Evaluation of targets set for prisoners and of teaching hours ordered are routinely reviewed and analysed. The education manager maintains detailed records of the hours of teaching given and the average numbers attending classes.

11. Education staff hold monthly meetings, with agendas and minutes copied to all staff and to the college. There are plans to increase these to twice monthly to ensure that all part-time staff are able to attend at least one meeting each month. Each curriculum area holds termly team meetings and carefully evaluates programme performance and considers new developments. The full-time staff hold weekly meetings to identify and deal with operational issues as they arise. Surveys of learners' perceptions of their course are conducted every quarter and the results fed into programme discussions at staff and curriculum team meetings. Staff were involved in putting together the self-assessment report, for the contracted college and its associated action plan.

## AREAS OF LEARNING

### Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

12. There are no learners working towards qualifications in catering and hospitality at the time of the inspection. Since February 2002, the catering service has been provided in a range of mobile units while the main kitchens have been undergoing refurbishment. Catering national vocational qualifications (NVQs) were withdrawn one year ago. Food handlers do receive training towards a foundation certificate in food hygiene. The new catering facilities will provide a training room and it is anticipated the NVQ programme for catering and hospitality will resume. There are two assessors who hold appropriate training and development qualifications. One member of staff has been identified to qualify as an internal verifier to replace a subcontracted verifier.

13. Learners participate in many physical education activities including basketball, volleyball, football, weight training, fitness training and table tennis. The two physical education venues are a small multi-purpose gymnasium and a larger weight training and cardio-vascular gymnasium. In late 2003, a large indoor sports centre is due to open, which will cater for the varied ages and fitness levels of such a large prison. The activities form part of a structured programme, organised by a senior physical education officer and eight physical education officers. There are three gymnasium orderlies who assist with the cleaning, preparation and maintenance of the facilities and equipment. Learners can participate in British Weight Lifting Association (BWLA) leaders' and basic courses, Community Sports Leader Award (CSLA), first aid, manual handling and NVQs in sport, recreation and allied occupations at level 1. At the time of inspection, there were no learners working towards these awards. The physical education department manages the courses as part of the prison's physical education programme. Four learners have just completed NVQs at level 1, two learners have been accredited with key skill units in communication at level 2 and eight learners completed BWLA leaders' awards in the past year. This year five BWLA courses have been run and on each course 75 per cent of learners achieved the award. The remainder left the prison before completion of the award. A CSLA course started in February 2002 and of the 16 learners who started 10 achieved the award.

### STRENGTHS

- effective use of time available in the gymnasium
- good training in the gymnasium

### WEAKNESSES

- poor range of sports resources
- ineffective use of learning opportunities in the gymnasium

## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better staff development in specialist sports areas
- better internal verification procedures in sport
- heightened awareness of health and safety issues by gymnasium staff

14. The provision for sport and leisure is satisfactory. The team of physical education staff are very well motivated and encourage participation of learners at all levels. The staff have a good range of qualifications. The well-structured activity programme allows most learners to take part in sport and recreation at least twice each week. The layout of the gymnasium is well arranged so that time there is maximised. However, escort timing and other prison routines are often detrimental to maximum participation and learning. Teaching of background knowledge and practical teaching is managed in a variety of ways which stimulate learning. There is a good balance of practical demonstration, written material and question and answer sessions. All physical education officers have a good rapport with learners. They use their personal experiences effectively to help learners to develop awareness of associated topics, such as personal hygiene, health concerns and employability prospects.

15. There are vast demands made on the physical education department, which they are unable to meet satisfactorily. A flexible and accommodating approach by staff ensures that learners get the most from their time in the department. There is an effective partnership with the education department and good sharing of resources to improve learning opportunities. The introduction of key skills training in communication is valued by the learners and while not yet integrated with other physical education courses, is motivational and challenging. Many opportunities for integrating application of number and IT exist within the programme, but these have not been fully developed. Learners' experiences are enriched by involvement with local community groups. Assisting people with disabilities when they visit the gymnasium helps learners to develop many personal skills and provides a valuable learning opportunity, but best use is not always made of these opportunities. The organisation and management of the physical education sessions ensures that many specific needs of learners are dealt with effectively. Good sessions for the physically less able, learners with specific drug problems and elite performers are skilfully incorporated into the programme. Disadvantaged learners are often asked to join existing sessions. This sometimes creates too large a group for the available facilities.

16. The lack of any outdoor facilities is detrimental to the complete development of the learner. There is only a narrow range of sport and leisure opportunities on offer. The large numbers of learners and time constraints often mean sessions are too short or not enough sessions can be created to suit individual needs. The facilities are not in peak condition and access to the first floor gymnasium is not easy, although a stairlift has been

installed. There are too few associated resources such as paper, teaching aids and visual aids. The lack of a suitable adjoining learning environment is not conducive to learners' progress. Some theory and induction sessions are carried out in unsuitable environments, for example induction sessions are held in a noisy area of the gymnasium. The staff, while well qualified in some sports, have little specialist training in IT, NVQ requirements or key skills. This reduces the support staff can give to learners and their ability to help learners make progress.

17. There are many good opportunities for learning and development within the physical education programme, but these are not drawn together into a cohesive framework. Links between various activities and awards are not being developed and unnecessary duplication of work exists. Best use is not being made of evidence of competence and much material is lost because of weak recording systems. Internal verification is separate from the good assessment procedure and no observations of assessors are carried out. Records of participation and progress are not detailed enough to provide a good source for measuring achievement, contribution and progress made by the learner. Very little self-evaluation occurs or assessment of the effectiveness of training sessions. There is little sharing of good practice.

## **Health, social care & public services**

18. There are nine learners following training in cleaning operations. This is the maximum number of learners that can follow the programme at any one time. All are working towards the British Institute of Cleaning Science (BICS) stage one qualification. One prison officer, who is qualified as a BICS assessor, is responsible for the programme. Learners are trained and assessed in a purpose-built workshop and attend for five hours a day each weekday for an average of 10 weeks. All learners attend a manual handling course and five are attending a business development workshop.

### **STRENGTHS**

- comprehensive and memorable induction
- well-equipped industrial cleaning workshops
- effective use of learners as trainers
- good achievement in industrial cleaning

### **WEAKNESSES**

- inadequate cover for tutor's absence
- lack of staff development

19. The provision for industrial cleaning is good. Learners start the programme with an induction day. All learners interviewed could remember in detail the content of the induction. It covered health and safety, rules for being on the course, a course outline and technical information. The session was well summarised, with a job description checklist. Learners are set questions at various stages of the induction to check their understanding. Individual training records are drawn up and maintained throughout the programme. Training takes place in a well-equipped workshop area. Rooms are fitted with different types of flooring, which need to be cleaned in a variety of ways. There is a mock bathroom facility and a mixture of wall surfaces, all of which provide good training and assessment opportunities. Learners receive good training and instruction and are appropriately tested when ready. The tutor monitors progress routinely, using clear monitoring paperwork. Tasks are allocated on a daily basis, determined by individual needs. Learners who achieve units benefit from being given the opportunity to train other learners. One orderly has been kept on after completing his training with the specific aim of training others. This gives him additional responsibilities and the opportunity to extend his skills. The learners he works with benefit from being taught by someone who understands their situation.

20. The achievement rate so far is good. Nine of the 29 learners who started since February 2002 have completed the award. A further nine are still in training, of whom

five more have almost completed the award. Most learners stay at the prison until they have completed their qualification. There is inadequate cover during the tutor's absence. The prison officer tutor is the only qualified assessor for the programme and there are no arrangements to cover his holidays or days off. This limits the opportunities for learners and extends their programme time. There is a lack of staff development opportunities. Tutors do not have qualifications which would allow them to expand the range of qualifications on offer, providing more options and progression routes for learners.

## **Foundation programmes**

21. The education department is situated in a separate building away from the main residential wings, with classrooms on two floors. There is no lift to the upper floor for learners with mobility problems, though classrooms on the ground floor are accessible and there is an accessible toilet. The new, purpose-built education and training centre will have modern facilities. In addition, the new hospital wing will have teaching facilities for outreach work. Some learners attend for up to 10 sessions each week, but some only come for five or fewer lessons. Most learners only spend a few months in education before they complete their sentence or move to another establishment. When learners attend court, their individual learning plans and folders of work are held for some weeks pending possible return to the prison or until details of their new prison is supplied to the education department. Only two learners were receiving ESOL support. The normal group size is 10-12, but 10 ESOL learners had been transferred to another local prison the week previously, together with information to help the new prison support their needs. The education manager maintains detailed monthly records of prisoners whose literacy and numeracy levels have been assessed.

22. Forty-two per cent of the education programme reflects the need for basic literacy and numeracy support, with 27 per cent dedicated to basic skills at level 1 or below and 15 per cent at levels 2 or 3 in basic and key skills. IT amounted to 17 per cent, with the rest being almost evenly divided between social and life skills modules in healthy living, personal development and citizenship, creative arts induction and tutorial or assessment time. Additional outreach support for prisoners in workshops and on the wings is available in the form of learner support packages.

## **STRENGTHS**

- relevant and appropriate range of courses
- well-managed department
- good links with other sections of the prison
- good relationships between staff and learners

## **WEAKNESSES**

- inefficient systems to ensure maximum take up of classes
- insufficient resources for art
- some poorly planned sessions
- lack of breaks during long teaching sessions



## OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better computer resources

23. For those who receive it, the provision in education is good. However, less than half of prisoners take part. Individual learning plans lack sufficient detail about the specific short-term targets which would enable learners to achieve their primary goals. Although learners sign the plans, they showed little awareness of what they were for or how they might contribute to their learning experience. Most learners are keen to attend classes and develop their skills. Effective relationships and respect exists between staff and learners. Exit from class slips controlled movement in the department while officers escorted prisoners to and from the building itself. There is good control of language and behaviour by learners. An atmosphere of good humour and purposeful activity pervades the department. An effective tutorial system enables learners to have confidential meetings with tutors at least once a month, when they can discuss changes to timetables, reviews of progress and any other concerns. Staff give good support to learners, dealing promptly with worries about housing or bullying by contacting the relevant staff in the prison.

24. Learners can select classes from a varied timetable, provided they have the necessary literacy skills and sufficient time in the prison. Flexibility is only limited by availability of space in a class. Some learners accept a second choice or take the sensitive guidance of staff if they have made an inappropriate choice. Of those learners tested for basic skills in September, 38 per cent required teaching at level 1 or below while only 27 per cent of the timetable allowed for this. Computer classes are popular, with initial accreditation being the main focus of teaching. Attainment in most classes is satisfactory or better. Learners play a full part in, and work well in, most sessions. Targets for achievement of qualifications at level 1 or below are met and likely to be exceeded. Results of examinations are posted in the department every week to encourage and motivate other learners and to celebrate success.

25. Morning sessions last for three hours and afternoon sessions for two. There are no defined breaks during sessions and learners' individual requests to go to the toilet disrupted teaching. Most teaching is satisfactory or better. Some sessions reflected the very short preparation time available to tutors who were covering for staff absences. During the week of inspection there were, exceptionally, four staff absent. Most sessions had lesson plans, although some lack detailed aims and specific objectives linked to achievement steps. Two rooms are available for art. One room has equipment for pottery and painting while the other is carpeted and unsuitable for such activities. The practical room is small and learners have little space to work effectively. Textbooks are old and very few learners refer to them. The art teacher worked alone. She was responsible for two rooms, leaving some learners unsupervised. One of these groups of learners was working on a cultural awareness project and was keen to finish the project for a national event the following week. Two connecting rooms are provided for IT.

## HMP BIRMINGHAM

Although fit for purpose the computers are over five years old and do not match current industrial standards. Some furniture used by learners is unfit for purpose. Teaching and achievement was satisfactory with learners well motivated and engaged.