

REINSPECTION REPORT

HMP Altcourse Reinspection

10 March 2006



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

HMP ALT COURSE REINSPECTION

Grading

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the four grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - inadequate*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

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 learning within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based learning for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- **learndirect** provision
- Adult and Community Learning
- training funded by Jobcentre Plus
- education and training in prisons, at the invitation of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons.
- adult information, advice and guidance services (**nextstep**)

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.

REINSPECTION REPORT

HMP Altcourse Reinspection

Contents

Description of the provider	1
Scope of provision	1
About the reinspection	2
Overall judgement	2
Grades	3
Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel	5
Foundation programmes	9

REINSPECTION REPORT

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROVIDER

1. HMP Altcourse is a category B local prison located near Liverpool. The prison has a physical capacity for 1,000 offenders. At the time of the final reinspection visit, the prison population was 980. Of these, 823 are adults and 157 are young offenders. Six hundred and twelve offenders are sentenced and 368 are on remand. The average length of stay for those who are sentenced is 12 weeks. The prison's population of remand and sentenced adults comes mainly from Cheshire and North Wales. The catchment area for young offenders is North Wales and Merseyside.

2. The head of learning and skills oversees the strategy for education and training at the prison. Education, which is subcontracted to a college of further education, is run by the education manager, who is supported by a deputy. The education department has a total of 37 teaching staff, of whom nine are full-time and 28 are sessional. A part-time administrator supports the work of the education department. Vocational training and work in the prison is led by the head of resettlement.

3. The prison aims to engage every offender in some form of activity. There are over 250 part-time and 140 full-time places in education. Part-time education is in the education college, while full-time education takes place on the residential wings. The prison has a range of workshops that employ over 250 offenders and involve recycling CDs, motor vehicle assembly, and welding and fabrication. Most offenders have access to literacy and numeracy support. Some offenders work for the prison's facilities department, maintaining the prison's grounds, or working in the kitchens, laundry or maintenance department. Others are involved in cleaning the residential units. Some offenders work as orderlies in areas such as the library, the gym and the kitchens.

SCOPE OF PROVISION

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

4. In sport and recreation, there are 11 learners working towards a nationally accredited fitness instructors qualification. Two learners who work as orderlies in the sports facilities are working towards a national vocational qualification (NVQ) at level 1 in sport and recreation. The physical education (PE) department is staffed by one acting manager and 11 activity development officers. Four orderlies work in the sports area. The acting manager is a trained assessor and internal verification services are brought in. Sports facilities consist of a large sports hall, two weight-training rooms, a cardiovascular fitness room and two outside pitches, one of which has an all-weather surface. A small classroom on one of the residential blocks is used for theory work. The fitness instructors course lasts for eight weeks and involves learners attending for five afternoons each week. NVQ candidates are assessed as part of their daily working routine. The recreational PE programme that is available for the whole prison population covers weight and fitness training, health rehabilitation, ball handling skills, racket sports and team

HMP ALT COURSE REINSPECTION

games. This programme takes place seven days a week including evenings, and allows for offenders to attend on a daily basis.

5. There are currently four learners in hospitality working towards NVQs at level 1 and 2 in food preparation and cooking. Catering in the prison is provided by an external contractor which employs a catering manager, two head chefs, eight assistant chefs and two storeroom assistants. Sixty-two learners are working in the main prison kitchen and the smaller staff servery kitchen. There are four qualified NVQ assessors. Assessments are carried out in the kitchens and learners receive individual coaching for skills and background knowledge development.

Foundation programmes

6. There are 121 learners on full-time and 253 on part-time foundation programmes. Part-time learners can attend the education college within the prison for two, one and a half hour sessions a day. Education on the residential wings is full-time from Monday to Friday for six hours each day. Some education classes also take place in the evenings that are accessed by those in full time employment. All learners who attend literacy and numeracy classes have the opportunity to take the national tests and to gain accreditation for their work. There is a full-time manager for all foundation programmes and a full time member of staff with responsibility for literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages. Twenty-five other staff teach on foundation courses. There are also a number of life skills courses that involve study in drug awareness, key skills and parenting craft. At induction, offenders are informed about the prison's education service and given information about the range of foundation classes. If offenders do not have a job within the prison then they must attend education classes.

ABOUT THE REINSPECTION

Number of inspectors	3
Number of inspection days	10
Number of learners interviewed	48
Number of staff interviewed	8
Number of subcontractors interviewed	7

OVERALL JUDGEMENT

7. HMP Altcourse was previously inspected in February 2005. Leadership and management, equality of opportunity and its arrangements for quality assurance were satisfactory. Training was good in information and communications technology and satisfactory in engineering, technology and manufacturing, retailing, customer service and transportation, and visual and performing arts and media. In hospitality, sport, leisure and travel, and foundation programmes, the quality of training was unsatisfactory. At the end of the reinspection process, the quality of training in hospitality, sport, leisure and travel is satisfactory and in foundation programmes it is good.

GRADES

grade 1= outstanding, grade 2 = good, grade 3 = satisfactory, grade 4 = unsatisfactory, grade 5 = very weak

Grades awarded at previous inspection

Engineering, technology & manufacturing		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Manufacturing - Other government-funded provision	11	3

Information & communications technology		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Using IT - Other government-funded provision	102	2

Retailing, customer service & transportation		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Customer service - Other government-funded provision	15	3

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Hospitality and catering - Other government-funded provision	8	4
Leisure, sport and recreation - Other government-funded provision	10	4

Visual & performing arts & media		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Arts - Other government-funded provision	124	3

Foundation programmes		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Other contributory areas - Other government-funded provision	330	4

HMP ALT COURSE REINSPECTION

Grades awarded at reinspection

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Hospitality and catering</i>		
- Other government-funded provision	4	3
<i>Leisure, sport and recreation</i>		
- Other government-funded provision	11	3
Foundation programmes		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i>		
- Other government-funded provision	374	2

AREAS OF LEARNING

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel

Hospitality, sport, leisure & travel		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Hospitality and catering</i> - Other government-funded provision	4	3
<i>Leisure, sport and recreation</i> - Other government-funded provision	11	3

Hospitality and catering

Strengths

- good development of hospitality and catering skills
- good individual support for learners in hospitality and catering

Weaknesses

- slow progress for some hospitality and catering learners
- insufficient quality assurance arrangements

Leisure, sport and recreation

Strengths

- good achievement on sport and recreation accredited courses
- very good access to recreational sports programme

Weaknesses

- poor accommodation for sport and recreation theory work
- insufficient management of sport and recreation
- insufficient quality assurance arrangements

Achievement and standards

8. Achievement on the sport and recreational accredited courses is good. On the fitness instructors course, achievement rates have been at 96 per cent for all three previous courses. On the weight-training leaders' course, achievement rates average 84 per cent. Learners significantly improve their knowledge and understanding, and their confidence and leadership skills are considerably enhanced through their participation on the courses.

9. Catering and hospitality learners have developed good skills, including practical craft skills, to help in the production of a wide range of products. This was identified as a

HMP ALT COURSE REINSPECTION

strength at the previous inspection. Learners have a good understanding of the safe use of equipment used for large scale catering, as well as developing good working practices in a compact kitchen, covering the requirements for NVQs in food production. Learners are involved in the planning of menus, displaying food for service and explaining dishes to the customers in the eating facility. The learners on programme enjoy their work and training. Since the time of the previous inspection, one learner has completed NVQs at levels 1 and 2. One learner was dismissed from the programme and two learners transferred to another prison. Progress is slow for some hospitality and catering learners. There is an unfilled post in the training department and one learner has had to attend mandatory courses. The post of training manager has now been filled and there is a waiting list of catering workers who want to sign up for the qualification.

Quality of education and training

10. Access to recreational sports programme is very good. Learners have the opportunity to attend sessions on every day of the week. These are organised in the daytime and evenings and almost 50 per cent of the prison population attend on a regular basis. The range of activities is varied covering health and fitness, weight training, team games and racket sports. The regular participation in sport contributes significantly to the physical and emotional wellbeing of the learners and helps them to participate more positively in other prison activity.

11. There is good support for learners in hospitality and catering. Individual learners have good working relationships with section chefs and accept the responsibility given to them. There is a high awareness of health and safety in a busy working area to avoid risk of accidents. Learners are supported by the education department and work on specific learning issues including spelling, grammar, comprehension, sentence construction, and weights and measures, using some occupational examples to help with portfolio completion. Learners have use of specific NVQ textbooks and a range of cookery books for individual study. Help is available from the catering contractor to assist the learners in eventually obtaining employment. Completion of qualifications is celebrated within the catering department with formal presentations.

12. In catering and hospitality, satisfactory training takes place mainly on the job with individual instruction from either of the two head chefs or one of the eight section chefs. There is, however, not enough recording of training. Assessment takes place mainly through observation and witness testimony. There is no use of photographic evidence. All learners in the catering section are regularly appraised and learners working towards NVQs have individual learning plans. Although generally satisfactory, these are not sufficiently detailed and do not drive the process of learning and completion of the qualification. Teaching on the accredited sports courses is satisfactory with well-planned sessions.

13. All learners receive an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy competence and, in most cases, where a learning need is identified, relevant support is provided by appropriately qualified staff. This arrangement works particularly well in catering and

hospitality.

14. The range of programmes currently available to catering and hospitality learners is satisfactory. Learners are now progressing from level 1 NVQ to level 2 NVQ. Learners carry out training related to food hygiene, cleaning schedules and the control of substances hazardous to health. Completion of this training is acknowledged with catering company certification. Catering and hospitality learners do not currently access the industry-standard qualification in food hygiene delivered within the prison education department. The range of courses available in sport and recreation are being further developed and are now taking place more frequently.

15. The accommodation used for sport and recreation theory work is poor. The small classroom located on an accommodation wing is too small and is difficult for teaching and does not provide an appropriate learning environment. There is insufficient space for learners to write and work on group activities. Practical facilities are satisfactory, with a large sports hall, weight training and cardiovascular rooms providing a range of activities. The two external sports pitches provide good additional space and allow learners to exercise outside.

Leadership and management

16. There is insufficient management and quality assurance in sport and recreation. Although learners have very good access to recreational PE, staff do not effectively lead the sessions. Learners are often supervised rather than coached or encouraged to improve. Some staff are now attending teacher training courses and governing body of sport qualifications in order to improve their competence. However, the overall level of coaching and instructional qualifications held by staff is poor. Staff are not observed when leading sessions and little feedback is given to individuals on their work performance in order to improve their effectiveness. Staff appraisals are not carried out on a regular basis and there is not enough use of learner feedback to improve the provision. Since the previous inspection, more accredited sports courses are now taking place.

17. In hospitality and catering, there are insufficient quality assurance arrangements. The post of training manager, vacant since the previous inspection, has only recently been filled. This role will reinforce existing good practice identified in the previous report and ensure each stage of the NVQ process is fully monitored. This includes target-setting, training, record-keeping, and assessment and review. There is a quality improvement group, which includes members from the catering department, the education department and the subcontracted catering company. The work of this group has enabled improved links with the education department. The catering subcontractor has targets for the number of NVQ units to be completed in the next year either through full completion of a qualification or completion of units. Unit achievement is now used successfully when a learner is either released or transferred from the prison. The resources are satisfactory for the delivery of the NVQs. Occupationally qualified staff, assessors and internal verifiers, support staff, operational facilities and equipment are all in place. Staff work well as a team to ensure the busy working environment produces hot food of a

HMP ALT COURSE REINSPECTION

satisfactory standard for the prison population.

Foundation programmes

Foundation programmes		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i> - Other government-funded provision	374	2

Literacy and numeracy

Strengths

- good learner achievement
- particularly good use of peer mentors to help learners
- good planning and action to improve the quality of provision

Weaknesses

- insufficient range and use of learning resources

Achievement and standards

18. At the previous inspection, there were high pass rates of more than 80 per cent in literacy and numeracy at level 1 and level 2, and these good achievement rates have been maintained. In addition, learners are also now achieving key skills qualifications at level 1 and level 2 and one learner has achieved key skill application of number at level 3. Since March 2005, 53 learners have achieved drug and alcohol awareness qualifications at level 1 and nine learners have succeeded at level 2.

19. Learners are making good progress. They are making significant improvement with their literacy, numeracy and communication abilities. For many, gaining accreditation for their work is often their first recognised qualification. Learners understand the personal effect of improving their capabilities. For example, learners on the drug and alcohol awareness course understand the personal impact of self-harm. Learners significantly improve their confidence and self-esteem in reading, writing and numeracy.

Quality of education and training

20. A new programme of peer mentoring support has been put in place and provides particularly good learner support. Mentors help individual learners overcome difficulties with their work and provide good motivation to encourage learners to succeed. They provide help to teaching staff who may not have the time to give individual attention to learners. Opportunities to be a mentor are advertised and those who apply have to meet appropriate criteria that includes having literacy and numeracy qualifications to at least level 2. When selected, mentors work towards a certificate in adult literacy or numeracy support at level 2. Some mentors have completed this qualification.

HMP ALTCOURSE REINSPECTION

Following release, one learner is now employed in the community and works with ex-offenders. Another learner, now a mentor, who had been out of education for 45 years, is working to support other learners studying towards higher-level qualifications. Mentoring is classified as a job in the prison and most mentors work over and above the requirements of their role. They also support learners on the residential wings and others who are unable to attend the education centre during normal hours.

21. At the previous inspection, teaching was unsatisfactory. Teaching has now improved and is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, a thorough review of all teaching has taken place. All teaching staff have been observed in the classroom. Those with particular development needs have been given additional support to improve their performance. Some new staff have also been appointed. All staff are either already qualified teachers or are working towards appropriate teacher training qualifications. Learning sessions are well managed. Teaching staff are enthusiastic and maintain a good pace throughout the sessions. The lesson plans are sufficiently detailed and explain the work to be covered. Some useful links are made between the literacy and numeracy skills being developed and their usefulness and relevance to everyday life and work. On the drug and alcohol course, every opportunity is taken to develop learner's literacy and numeracy skills. New concepts are explained clearly and learners' understanding is checked and reinforced. In the residential units, tutors work very effectively to maintain learners' enthusiasm and most learners receive individual teaching and also work well on their own. In all learning sessions, there is good interaction and participation, and learners are well motivated to complete their tasks. There are very good working relationships between tutors and learners.

22. The monitoring and recording of learners' progress is satisfactory. Each learner has an individual learning plan that contains a long-term goal and a series of short-term targets. When the targets have been met, the date is recorded on the plan. For those attending education in the residential wings, the targets are clearly related to the literacy and numeracy core curriculum. These learners also have their progress reviewed on a weekly basis and new targets are identified and recorded. Tutors also record comments on an attached sheet to ensure continuity throughout the learners' programme.

23. All learners complete an initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills during the induction period and almost all then attend the education centre where a further diagnostic assessment is carried out. This process is effective in identifying the support needs for learners, and the education department ensures that appropriate help is given to learners where required.

24. At the previous inspection, the range of learning resources was insufficient with learners spending much of their time completing photocopied worksheets. Although some progress has been made with this issue, this still remains a weakness. Learners now have a choice of developing their literacy and numeracy skills by completing a project on a topic of interest to them. However, there is still repetitive use of worksheets. Tutors have developed some innovative learning activities that have included quizzes and game activities and these have helped to develop learners' literacy and numeracy skills. However, these are not used on a sufficiently frequent basis. Some

learners working towards literacy at level 1 and 2 have access to information technology and can use colour and graphics within their learning programme. These facilities are not available to all learners. In some lessons there is more use of video resources in response to learners' requests and plans are being implemented to widen the use of audiovisual materials.

Leadership and management

25. Leadership and management has improved since the previous inspection and there has been good progress with the post-inspection development plan to improve the quality of provision. Progress with actions is carefully monitored, reviewed and recorded. There is now a clearly developed skills for life strategy, the government's strategy on training in literacy, numeracy and the use of language, and staff have attended a range of external events to develop and update their skills and knowledge.

26. There is now an effective process to quality assure the standard of teaching and learning. Staff are frequently observed when teaching in the classroom. Feedback is given to staff on their performance and where a training or development need is identified, appropriate support is given. Surveys of learner feedback are regularly carried out and the results are used to consider possible improvements to the provision. Managers have encouraged all teaching staff to be involved in decision-making and discussing improvements to the provision, and they have been actively involved in trying out new processes for learning. This has included the implementation of the learning plan, a more effective review process, and further development of teaching resources.

27. There is very good internal communications with all staff meeting frequently to discuss teaching and learning issues and learner progress. There are formal meetings on a regular basis and staff meet daily to discuss teaching and learning issues. Managers have started to collect and analyse data with regard to course performance and a new computer software programme is being introduced to make this more effective.