

HMP High Down Reinspection

Adult Learning Inspectorate Inspection Report 18 April 2006

Reinspection date 18 April 2007

Inspection number 307223

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Background information

Inspection judgements

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

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

Description of the provider

1. HMP High Down is situated two miles from Sutton town centre and one mile from Banstead town centre. HMP High Down opened in September 1992 and is the last of five repeat prisons based upon the design implemented for Bullingdon Prison and was built to supplement the current stock of London prisons. It was upgraded to Category A status following the Woodcock Report. During 2002, the Category A estate was evaluated and HMP High Down lost its Category A status in July 2003. The site chosen for HMP High Down was previously occupied by, Banstead Psychiatric Hospital, and is situated in a prime position on Banstead Downs.
2. The role of HMP High Down is to serve the crown courts at Croydon, Wallington, Kingston and Guildford and the magistrate courts attached to them. It is a Category B local prison, which accommodates remand or sentenced offenders. The cells in the four main house blocks and healthcare centre, which are single, double and treble occupancy, all have integral sanitation. The certified normal accommodation is 649 places, however, the operational capacity is currently 749. At the time of the reinspection there were 747 prisoners of which 68 are vulnerable prisoners and 150 are young adults. Half of the prison population are on remand. The average length of stay has reduced to six weeks since the previous inspection.
3. All offenders whether they are on remand or sentenced, are offered the opportunity to involve themselves in work, education or training at HMP High Down. Provision for those classed as young adults is fully integrated with the prison's regimes. The head of learning and skills is responsible for education and training and work activities. Education is contracted to North East Surrey College of Technology (NESCOT) which provides 120 part-time places in education.

Grades

grade 1= outstanding, grade 2= good, grade 3= satisfactory, grade 4= inadequate

Grades awarded at previous inspection

Leadership and management		3
Contributory grades:		
Equality of opportunity		3
Quality improvement		4

Health, public services and care		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Cleaning</i>		3
Other government-funded provision	36	3

Information and communications technology		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>ICT for users</i>		3
Other government-funded provision	42	3

Retail and commercial enterprise		2
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Hospitality and catering</i>		2
Other government-funded provision	19	2

Leisure, travel and tourism		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>Sport, leisure and recreation</i>		3
Other government-funded provision	13	3

Preparation for life and work		4
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>ESOL</i>		3
Other government-funded provision	19	3
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i>		4
Other government-funded provision	79	4
<i>Independent living</i>		2
Other government-funded provision	14	2

Grades awarded at reinspection

Preparation for life and work		3
Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>ESOL</i>		3
Other government-funded provision	17	3
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i>		3
Other government-funded provision	86	3
<i>Independent living</i>		2
Other government-funded provision	41	2

About the reinspection

The partial reinspection took place due to preparation for life and work being identified as unsatisfactory in the previous inspection in May 2006. On reinspection, the provision for preparation for life and work was judged to be satisfactory. Reinspection took place over a period of time with two visits to the prison.

Number of inspectors	2
Number of inspection days	3
Number of learners interviewed	38
Number of staff interviews	17
Number of locations/sites/learning centres visited	1
Number of visits	2

Areas of learning

Preparation for life and work

Grade 3

Contributory areas:	Number of learners	Contributory grade
<i>ESOL</i>		
Other government-funded provision	17	3
<i>Literacy and numeracy</i>		
Other government-funded provision	86	3
<i>Independent living</i>		
Other government-funded provision	41	3

4. At the time of the reinspection 144 learners are on preparation for life and work programmes, 86 on literacy and numeracy, 41 on life skills and 17 on ESOL. Since the original inspection, a skills for life co-ordinator has been appointed. Induction for learners has been restructured. Initial assessment takes place with a further diagnostic testing to inform the individual learning plan and staff. Most of the sessions are delivered by NESCOL in the education department. Some literacy and numeracy and language support is provided in the workshops and vocational training areas. Learners are able to access information, advice and guidance sessions with a **nextstep** adviser while attending education sessions and when the adviser visits the house blocks.

Strengths

- high pass rates for literacy at level one
- good development and recognition of personal and social skills
- high levels of academic and pastoral support for learners

Weaknesses

- inconsistent use of individual learning plans for target setting
- insufficient breaks during lessons in some classes

Achievement and standards

5. Pass rates on adult literacy at level one continue to be high at 88%. Pass rates for other courses are satisfactory with the exception of ESOL which has significantly reduced since the original inspection due to the financial implication of registering learners with the awarding body and the reduced length of stay. Attendance and punctuality are generally satisfactory, although during the inspection some classes started up to 30 minutes late due to regime practices. The prison now has a policy of over-recruiting to classes by up to 20% to ensure classes are full and meeting Prison Service classroom efficiency targets; however, this results in learners being turned away on occasions and consequently demotivating learners.

The quality of provision

6. Most teaching is now satisfactory with no inadequate teaching observed during inspection. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching is good in some lessons with a range of innovative activities. Learners are motivated and stimulated and despite the length of lessons continue to be engaged in learning and make good progress with their work. Lessons are thoroughly prepared by well qualified and experienced staff. Lesson plans are detailed, comprehensive and well thought out.
7. The induction progress is thorough and a new starting out programme ensures that the initial assessment is thorough and informs subsequent learning activities. Staff take account of individual learning styles and effectively differentiate learning in sessions. Learners engage in discussions and group activities with relish and support each other well. Information technology is used well to support learning in many lessons. Learners' behaviour is good and staff frequently challenge any inappropriate remarks made by learners in a supportive way. Learners in the vulnerable prisoners unit and in the workshops, are provided with courses at their place of work or in the unit.
8. ESOL learners have a restricted range of qualifications at entry level although those at level one and two are able to take adult literacy qualifications. Learners on literacy and numeracy courses at level one and two are able to engage in a fast track course so that many achieve a qualification in three to four weeks. Learners assessed at entry level are able to take a qualification but this is aimed at achievement in some 10 weeks. Many of the learners are transferred out before they achieve.
9. Learners on most courses develop good personal, practical and social skills. This was identified as a strength in the previous inspection, particularly in the independent living programmes and continues to be so. Highly effective support by teaching staff, has extended this to the other preparation for life and work programmes. Many learners, especially the young adults, display a mature approach to sharing experiences among peers and often are proactive in supporting learners with language difficulties. Staff have broadened out courses to provide learners with money management and self-employment skills.
10. Teaching staff and residential officers provide excellent pastoral support and there is very effective support from peer mentors and classroom assistants, many of whom are prisoners. Staff work well in monitoring learners' progress and there are effective systems in place to ensure that learners' progress is recorded and passed onto other staff and mentors. However, while this strong support helps learners achieve personal targets, the peer mentoring programme lacks co-ordination.
11. Progress has been made in the development of individual learning plans. A member of staff has been appointed to assist with the review of learners' progress and this is working effectively, to support teaching staff and help learners identify targets for progression. Learners' progress is monitored and recorded well. Targets are better recorded and used well to identify learning styles and activities to support learning. This area has yet to be fully developed. The use of individual learning plans lacks consistency. Staff use a variety of learning plans and long term aims are sketchy and often repeat the words of learners, for example, 'use my brain'. Staff do not explore these and thus targets are sometimes vague.

Leadership and management

12. Curriculum management has improved and is now satisfactory. A basic skills co-ordinator was appointed in June 2006. Staff are now fully aware of their roles and responsibilities and good progress has been made with a comprehensive and detailed skills for life strategy which fully identifies implementation and development needs. Communications are good and regular staff meetings ensure that staff are kept up to date with developments. Part-time staff regularly attend meetings. A lesson observation process has been implemented by the learning and skills contractor although not all staff have been observed and feedback to staff is inconsistent. Data with regards to pass rates is collated but there have been some problems in consistency of recording outcomes in the last year. There is insufficient analysis of the data to identify any trends. Lessons are too long, sessions last for three hours in the morning and for two and a half hours in the afternoon. While teachers use a range of activities to support learning and break up lessons, there are no formal breaks for learners. Learners often take comfort breaks during the lessons and this causes some disruption, particularly when group activities are taking place.

