

HMP Brixton

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Background information

Inspection judgements

Inspectors use a four-point scale to summarise their judgements about achievement and standards, the quality of provision, and leadership and management, which includes a grade for equality of opportunity.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Further information can be found on how inspection judgements are made on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Scope of the inspection

In deciding the scope of the inspection, inspectors take account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and comments from the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) or other funding body. Where appropriate, inspectors also consider the previous inspection report (www.ofsted.gov.uk), reports from the inspectorates' quality monitoring or annual assessment visits, and data on learners and their achievements over the period since the previous inspection.

In addition to reporting on overall effectiveness of the organisation, its capacity to improve further, achievement and standards, quality of provision and leadership and management, this inspection focused on specialist provision in:

- Preparation for life and work programmes:
 - employability training
 - literacy, numeracy and ESOL
 - personal development and social integration

Description of the provider

1. HMP Brixton is an adult male, category B, local prison serving central and south London. The prison is located in Victorian buildings and building programme is underway to provide a new kitchen and eventually additional learning space. The building work places more pressure on the current space than usual. HMP Brixton has no industrial workshops.
2. The operational capacity is 798. At the time of inspection there were some 792 offenders of which approximately 60% were on remand. The average length of stay is approximately two months. Some 44% are from minority ethnic groups according to prison service categories. The average number of inductions to the prison is 76 a week. In the last six months 66% of the population were identified at basic skills entry level 1 - 3 or below with 6% below entry level. Approximately 14% were identified with English as a second language.
3. Learning and skills is offered on a part-time basis and 120 places are available in formal classes every morning and afternoon. Approximately 100 learners participate in work in their cells. The main education provision is contracted to Lewisham College under the OLASS contract who offer training programmes in numeracy, literacy, key skills, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), social and life skills, art, preparation for work, and information and communications technology (ICT). The prison service, through the physical education (PE) department, offers recreational courses and a few accredited programmes. Prisoners work in the stores, kitchens, yards and gardens, and on the wings as cleaners and servers. The library is subcontracted to a Lambeth county council.
4. A small number of short employment related courses such as customer care, food hygiene and health and safety are provided by consultants contracted by Lewisham College. Information, advice and guidance services are contracted to the London Advice Partnership (LAP). Additional information, advice and guidance (IAG) services are contracted to providers by LAP. Some of the treatment programmes offered at HMP Brixton are provided through the prison service.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
Employability training	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Literacy, numeracy and ESOL	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Personal development and social integration	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Quality of provision	Good: Grade 2
Employability training	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Literacy, numeracy and ESOL	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Personal development and social integration	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Leadership and management	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Equality of opportunity	Good: Grade 2

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

5. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Overall achievement and standards and the quality of provision are also good, including employability training, literacy, numeracy and ESOL and personal development and social integration. The provision meets the needs of learners' who are supported well. Leadership and management are good as is the prison's approach to equality of opportunity.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

6. The prison has demonstrated that it is in a good position to make improvements. The prison has a clear and shared objective with its partners to provide learning and skills which supports the reduction of re-offending. The strategic planning process is thorough and makes good use of self-assessment and a needs analysis to ensure that plans meet the needs of the changing and developing prison population, such as improvements, in the collection of data and the introduction of shorter employment related courses which include customer care programme and PE awards. Since the change in OLASS contractor there have been significant improvements in the operation of learning and skills provision. The links between learning and skills and prison staff are strong, and quality improvement arrangements are now in place and working well in most areas of the prison. External agencies, such as LAP, have improved the quantity and quality of the IAG service to the prison. The resettlement function in the prison is developing and useful links with support agencies are being formed.
7. The self-assessment process is effective and working well. The development plans of the prison and education provider are clearly linked and complementary. They are regularly monitored and updated and act as effective drivers for improvement. The self-assessment report is largely accurate and the prison has a clear development plan to rectify problems and progress areas for improvement. The report provides an accurate picture of the provision and includes both an account of progress made since the last self-assessment report, and a detailed action plan.

Key strengths

- High pass rates on most programmes
- Significantly good teaching and learning
- Well developed and very effective internal and external partnerships supporting community cohesion
- Good curriculum development including established and combined key skills
- Strong focus on equality and diversity

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient access for all offenders to learning and skills, PE, library including evenings and weekends

- Inappropriate accommodation in some areas

Main findings

Employability training

Achievement and standards

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

8. Achievement of qualifications and individual learning aims is good. Learners achieve well in ICT. Over 65% of learners remain on programmes of which 85% achieve a full award at level one. Most learners participate in ICT, which is well resourced. Achievement of other qualifications, for example, radio production studies, is also high and, where possible, learners receive support to remain in the prison rather than be transferred to another prison to complete their programmes. The physical education department offers a few accredited courses, primarily related to weight training and the few learners, who complete the programmes, achieve. Those who complete employment related courses such as health and safety, food hygiene and customer care also achieve full awards.
9. Learners quickly achieve good practical skills in ICT. Experienced staff support learners in developing skills and learners show a clear understanding of the theory and technical terms. This is particularly noticeable in radio production where learners are encouraged to develop presentation skills and interviewing techniques through recordings and broadcasts over the prison radio network. The sound studios provide a professional atmosphere which promotes and supports the acquisition of interpersonal skills such as team working and problem solving. Learners are able to gain accreditation of these skills through a well established literacy programme which is clearly linked to the radio production award.
10. Attendance in most programmes is very good and prison staff work well to get learners to their place of employment on time. Punctuality is sometimes affected by regime practices and prisoner movements.

Quality of provision

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

11. Teaching and learning are good. In the better learning sessions tutors are well prepared and use a wide range of learning styles to motivate learners. They are keen and eager to learn. In practical sessions staff demonstrates tasks well to contextualise learning. For example, in the ICT sessions, tutors use whiteboards and discussions to draw out the parts of a computer and then move onto dismantling a computer to show the learners the different computer parts such as the hard drive and memory cards. This is followed by a computerised quiz to check learners' understanding. Learners on the radio studies programme use live interviews and broadcasts, with governors and offenders to keep offenders up to date with changes in the prison and provide feedback on developments. In the weaker sessions there is too much use of paper based resources and insufficient recording of learners' progress. Those learners who are able to work unsupervised are given painting tasks around the establishment, however, much of this work is not accredited.
12. Staff are well trained in supporting learners development of portfolios of achievement to evidence learning and accreditation, and recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) to record learning which is not formally accredited, for example, some ICT courses in web design and professional speaking courses. In some cases the use

of targets to help learners progress is under developed and is mainly aimed at qualifications or competencies achieved rather than what is needed to progress further.

13. Programmes to support employability training are good but limited. While most offenders are only at Brixton for six to eight weeks, those serving longer sentences are not provided with support for transition to other establishments. No contract workshops exist to support development of learners' work skills. However, good links are maintained with employers and community agencies, through Lewisham College and support agencies such as Jobcentre Plus and **nextstep**. Some learners who completed the radio production courses have gained work in community radio stations after release. The range of well developed short introduction courses lasting up to two weeks provide appropriate progression routes within the prison and to external education and training programmes through local colleges. A good short accredited preparation for work course is offered by Lewisham College at entry level and level one. A well attended and supported job fair in the prison offers offenders the opportunity to talk to providers and local agencies about support upon release. Links to resettlement within the prison are currently underdeveloped.
14. ICT resources are excellent with good computers and software. Staff have developed an internal website which provides material for learning sessions and support for jobsearch and hints and tips on aspects such as interviewing techniques and writing job applications. This is however, only available to those on ICT courses. Although classroom accommodation has improved since the previous inspection some classrooms remain inadequate for teaching with staff and learners walking through classrooms to access other rooms.

Literacy, numeracy and ESOL

Achievement and standards

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

15. Achievement and standards are good. Most pass rates on literacy, numeracy and key skills qualifications are high. For example, 94% of learners who completed their learning aim gained an award at entry levels 1-3 in numeracy and 90% achieved an established communication key skill at level 1. Pass rates on ESOL qualifications for beginner and intermediate levels are also high at but numbers taking examinations are very low. Many learners produce good work in learning sessions demonstrating newly acquired skills. Punctuality, although dependent on the prison regime movements is generally good. However, attendance in some classes is low. During the inspection week as few as 50% of learners were attending some classes. Behaviour in all classes observed was very good with most learners actively engaged in learning. In some sessions learners helped and supported each other well, but this support while effective was often informal.

Quality of provision

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

16. The quality of provision is good. Teaching and learning are particularly good. In the better learning sessions, learners are engaged and well motivated. Tutors and learners work well with each other. Learning sessions usually last an hour with breaks in between classes. This works well and learners are enthusiastic about the learning process. They work collaboratively with their peers and participate with confidence. Tutors plan lessons well providing a range of tasks to take account of learners differing needs and preferred learning styles. Learners are polite, respectful and well mannered during lessons.

17. Learning resources and most refurbished classroom spaces are good, with new computers and furniture and attractive displays of learners' work. Useful information and posters provide a stimulating learning environment. However, some courses share classrooms and there is much noise disruption during these sessions. Classroom provision on some of the prison wings is too small.
18. Support for learners is particularly good. Learners complete a thorough initial assessment of their learning needs, including their preferred learning styles, during their induction into education. A dedicated teaching space is provided and a tutor oversees this process and informs learners of opportunities and support arrangements available. Good records are kept of initial assessment outcomes and learners are placed on appropriate courses. Learner education co-ordinators are recruited on the prison wings to support and encourage learners to participate in education and act as learning champions. Information, advice and guidance sessions provided by LAP are effective in helping learners to explore education opportunities within prison and on release. Good records are kept of interviews and sessions are evaluated and quality assured.
19. The recording and monitoring of learners' progress in literacy, numeracy and language sessions is satisfactory overall. In some cases records identify specific measurable targets which are reviewed and changed to reflect learners' progress, while others state general targets which are not personalised, specific or measurable. Closer attention has been given to improving the quality of individual learning plans including an audit of plans, sharing good practice and staff training activities.
20. Provision to meet the needs and interests of learners is good. The skills for life strategy is effectively set out and clearly focuses on the complexity of learners' needs and flexibility of approach required within the prison. The accompanying action plan clearly highlights further embedding of provision and increasing accreditation opportunities. There has been an increased ESOL offer, covering beginners and intermediate levels and the development of classes on the wings to enable new learners to participate in a more familiar setting. However, no evening or weekend classes are provided to meet the needs of those learners who work, or additional enrichment activities to enhance the learners' experience and allow time to develop language skills outside of the formal education setting. The in-cell education provides additional literacy, numeracy and language support and support is also available for those offenders segregated from the main population, for example, on the vulnerable offenders' wing and in the care and separation unit.

Personal development and social integration

Achievement and standards

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

21. Learners achieve well on most courses. Pass rates and standards of work are good. Most learners who complete the programmes achieve. The exception is the drugs course offered by the prison service. All learners who finish the accredited social and life skills programmes have fully achieved at entry level or level one. Learners' standards of work are good and appropriate to their individual learning needs and capabilities. The standard of portfolio work is particularly good. The radio production course is used very effectively to develop personal and social integration skills and these are recognised and recorded well.

22. Many learners progress well and staff work very effectively to ensure that they are given many opportunities to integrate and benefit from learning about different cultures. Learners develop high standards of creative work using a good range of different medium. Their work is widely displayed especially in the visits area. The standard of learners' work is particularly good on art visual design courses where learners quickly gain confidence in their ability and develop good skills. Recently a computer has been supplied and installed in the art area to extend learners' design skills. Attendance is very good and there are very good levels of respect in classes which often have many different nationalities, religions and cultures represented.

Quality of provision

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

23. Teaching and learning in most sessions are good and stimulate and motivate learners. In most learning session's good use is made of discussion and debates to explore relevant topics. These are well managed by skilled tutors. Tutors work well to maintain learners' interest and attention. However, in some learning sessions tutors sometimes struggle with the difficulties of learners of different ages and with different capabilities. Some 100 learners are engaged in learning on the residential wings. Much of this is supported through insufficient paper based resources of a poor quality. The prison has recognised the difficulties of sustaining this work in terms of setting individual targets and monitoring progress and has recently devoted more teaching support to the work, to encourage achievement. In some areas prisoners work well with learners to help them develop their learning but this is currently not recognised or accredited.
24. Many of the social and life skills courses cover budget and financial management, family relationships and citizenship. Working relationships with the chaplaincy are very good and very effective. The faith team provides a range of courses and support groups for a wide range of faiths and beliefs. Participation rates over the last twelve months exceed 1000 for many of the programmes. These include, for example, study groups, film societies and Alpha courses. The radio network is used very effectively to provide prisoners with information about what is on offer. The range of courses to support personal development and social integration is generally limited and also restricted by the buildings and space available.
25. The art course is well delivered on one of the wings, but the accommodation is located in two adjoined cells and is inadequate for the provision. It is too small and poorly lit, although well stocked with resource material. Some learners are provided with arts materials for use in their cells outside of the core day. The personal officer programme is developing well in the prison and staff are very supportive of learning and skills. There is little higher level learning with only five or six learners currently involved in learning, the exception being those who arrive at the prison studying for Open University courses or those who are able to fund themselves.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

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26. Leadership and management are good. The prison has introduced good recent initiatives to develop the provision and make improvements. Particularly effective use is made of external funding including the European Social Fund to create additional opportunities for prisoners and to provide additional learning resources. The Prison Governor and senior staff are fully committed to learning and skills and the strategy to focus on improving the provision is highly effective. The introduction of a well regarded prison radio service has been a particularly good means of widening participation. This service has been thoughtfully developed and offers prisoners an outstanding opportunity to share views and learn useful information and develop employability skills widely recognised by the radio industry. Clear plans are in place to develop this further and to introduce additional regular programmes such as keep fit and healthy living.
27. Learning and skills are very well managed and although some staff are relatively new, most are well qualified and experienced. A well developed intranet is useful for offenders to view current job vacancies near their release. Resettlement areas have been established on the residential wings which provide information about education and training opportunities in the community, although this has yet to be fully developed and some areas on the wings are better served than others in terms of space and equipment. The library is well managed by one full-time and one part-time librarian from the London Borough of Lambeth library service. There has been significant recent improvement to the provision and its co-location with the education department is user friendly and more accessible to learners, however, there is a lack of clarity about segregated offenders and their access. No learning and skills provision is available at the weekends or in the evenings.
28. Collaborative partnership working inside and outside the prison is good. Providers within the prison work effectively together and regular meetings are well attended and productive. This includes, for example, Lewisham College, LAP and Jobcentre Plus. Staff works well together to ensure a co-ordinated approach to curriculum development. Good links have been created with outside organisations to ensure prisoners have good pathways to progress into employment and/or further training if they wish. LAP has created good opportunities for additional support and employment activities through a local community training provider and comprehensive IAG is provided four days per week. Staff in the prison radio department work well with local community radio services as well as the BBC.
29. Lewisham College and LAP have developed highly effective quality monitoring procedures which are well established and used thoroughly. Observations of teaching and learning are very thorough and clearly result in improvements. The observation process extends to IAG advisers and in all cases the outcomes are shared with the prison head of learning and skills. Staff development is good and teaching and learning staff are well supported. Learners' views are regularly sought and well used to inform change. Lewisham College give good feedback to learners of the outcomes from questionnaires and surveys by posting results clearly on walls in the education department.
30. Assessment and verification are satisfactory and clearly recorded. Resources are generally good although some classrooms are too small and poorly sited. Learners have good access to well produced learning resources and materials in most areas. This includes modern ICT facilities, books and handouts. In-cell education has not been well monitored in the past and structured progress monitoring has only recently started to improve the provision.

Staff training is satisfactory and further opportunities for development and sharing of best practices between staff and providers are being implemented.

31. Strategies to meet the needs of vulnerable offenders and the relatively small number of offenders serving longer sentences are inadequate. The learning and skills strategy is clearly written although there is insufficient focus on the requirements of these offenders as well as those on segregation. Offenders on the vulnerable and segregation wings have no access to ICT and are only able to access courses in literacy, numeracy and art. The curriculum in PE is particularly narrow although plans are in place to improve this provision further. Attendance is poor at some literacy and numeracy classes although positive moves have been made to tackle this with the employment of a retention and recruitment officer. Although it is too early to see the full impact of this a steady improvement in attendance has been identified, particularly on wing education.
32. Analysis and use of data is insufficient in some areas. Although Lewisham College collects, analyses and uses data well to inform decisions, in other areas of the prison data is not used adequately. Data in some areas is used well for compliance purposes but not well analysed or used to help identify trends. In the PE department, for example, data on ethnicity and age are collected but not analysed by wing and is not used to identify trends in attendance or those who pass courses. LAP collects a good range of data, which is well presented, but each stage of the IAG process is not analysed by ethnicity or age. Data is not yet fed back to all stakeholders. Library data is collected but it is difficult to identify attendance by those with disabilities.
33. Equality of opportunities and diversity are good with a strong focus on ensuring improved access to provision. Equality and diversity are thoroughly reinforced through well produced in-house posters, classroom teaching and a wide range of prison activities. The prison radio holds regular live weekly broadcasts from the chaplaincy and also broadcasts programmes relating to Black History Week and Rock Against Racism. Other successful initiatives to promote equality and celebrate diversity have included the Ann Frank Exhibition and plays put on in the prison with diversity topics. Complaints are dealt with promptly which has been an improvement since the previous inspection and there is generally good respect between learners and staff. Good access to most areas of the prison is provided for those with mobility problems although some areas are still difficult to enter mainly due to the constraints of the buildings. Access to the gym for those employed in the prison or those in education is poor. Outside recreation is also poor. The current pay policy disadvantages those who wish to access education although this has been identified by the prison and a new policy is soon to be introduced to address this. The procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements. All vetting procedures are well established.

What learners like:

- ‘Cool teaching staff’
- ‘The radio station work is really good’
- ‘Tutors are excellent, they really know their stuff’
- ‘The new equipment is really, really good’
- ‘I am grateful for the chance to learn English’
- ‘I like the access to water in the education department’

What learners think could improve:

- ‘More vocational training’
- Access to the library
- Provision of PE courses in the evenings and weekends
- Speed of applications for Open University courses
- ‘Sharing the classroom is a problem’
- ‘Noisy classroom above the gym’