

HMP Springhill

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32075

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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' monitoring 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 Spring Hill is an open prison for men near the town of Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire. The prison is adjacent to HMP Grendon, a male Category B prison with a regime of therapeutic care. Many of the prison's administrative functions are operated jointly with HMP Grendon. HMP Spring Hill was opened in 1953 as the first open prison in the country. It caters for Category D offenders, focusing on resettlement.
2. The prison has an occupational capacity of 334. Most offenders are serving sentences of between four and ten years, although the prison does have some lifers nearing the end of their sentence. A large number of offenders have three months or less to serve. A very small number of the prison population are from minority ethnic groups. No offenders are currently identified with English as an additional language.
3. Education is subcontracted to Milton Keynes College, which offers part-time courses in literacy and numeracy, information and communications technology (ICT) and social and life skills. This includes courses in art and design as well as survival cookery. The prison provides a range of accredited training and employment opportunities. Other employment opportunities exist for offenders on licence in the community, and almost half the prison population works outside the prison. Some offenders are on study programmes outside the prison.
4. The governor has overall responsibility for both prisons, and the head of learning and skills is responsible for vocational training and education. An education manager from Milton Keynes College manages the education department. Education is provided for 144 prisoners. Buckinghamshire County Library Service runs the prison library.

Summary of grades awarded

Effectiveness of provision	Good: Grade 2
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Capacity to improve	Good: Grade 2
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Achievement and standards	Good: Grade 2
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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	Satisfactory: Grade 3
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Employability training	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
Literacy, numeracy and ESOL	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3
Personal development and social integration	Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

Leadership and management	Good: Grade 2
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Equality of opportunity	Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2
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Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Good: Grade 2

5. The overall effectiveness of the provision is good. Achievement and standards are good in literacy and numeracy, employability training and in personal development and social integration. The quality of provision is good in employability training, and satisfactory in personal development and social integration and in literacy and numeracy. Leadership and management of the provision are good. Equality of opportunity is also good.

Capacity to improve

Good: Grade 2

6. Learning and skills provision is in a good position to make improvements. Development planning for improvement is particularly effective, as is the self-assessment process. Nearly all the areas for improvement identified in previous inspection reports have been remedied. The prisons approach to quality improvement is satisfactory.
7. The latest self-assessment report was produced in April 2008 and involved staff, learners and employers. The summary section of the self-assessment report provides a clear overview of the process and summary of findings. The report did not identify issues under each strand although it clearly identified the key strengths and areas for improvement overall. The quality development group has been used effectively as a forum to drive self-assessment. Self-assessment is an ongoing process and covers all areas of the prison where there is involvement in learning. The contractors and the prison produce useful analysis of performance of different groups of learners. This data is used effectively to support quality improvements.

Key strengths

- High pass rates on many programmes
- Strong leadership of learning and skills
- Outstanding partnership working to enhance provision
- Good progress into employment and further training

Key areas for improvement

- Insufficient quality monitoring across all the provision and employment
- Inadequate short-term target-setting for learners

Main findings

Employability training

Achievement and standards

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

8. The prison has developed effective strategies to progress offenders into employment or further education and training upon release. Of those who were released from the prison in the year before the inspection just over 40% had some form of employment or further training to go to. The Employment Links Manager and the deputy education manager interview prisoners jointly to ensure that the programme determined for each prisoner is directly relevant to his employment goals. Potential employment targets are agreed and recorded effectively. Good recording and recognition takes place of prisoner's prior learning.
9. Learners produce work of a high standard. Standards in brickwork training are particularly high. Sample letters of application produced by learners in jobsearch sessions are well constructed and realistic. In computer hardware classes learners are able to fault find, dismantle and reassemble computers with confidence. Those taking the business start-up course after a short time are able to write realistic plans to determine break-even points for businesses.

Quality of provision

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

10. The individual coaching that learners receive is good. Where a learner needs to re-do work, he is given the positive aspects before being told what needs to be done to correct the faults. This approach is effective in maintaining confidence and motivation. In all sessions, tutors are readily available and they circulate the room to identify where a learner might need assistance before being asked.
11. The prison's outstanding partnership working has helped develop a good range of employability programmes. The range of courses has been developed using local and national labour market information and some information from prisoners' expressing their career aspirations. The prison is clearly aware of the changing job market. A good range of courses are offered to suit the needs of most prisoners. These include short courses such as basic food hygiene and longer programmes such as a Level 1 in bricklaying or computer hardware courses. In addition, the prison works very closely with a number of partners to provide additional training opportunities. For example, an external company provides training in lift truck driving and another in the use of heavy construction equipment. Learners from the prison are able to train alongside people from outside the prison. The prison has adopted an innovative approach to providing training opportunities for its learners. It is at present working with a national provider of training for the health and fitness industry to provide learning opportunities for prisoners and people from outside the prison who wish to work in fitness centres. In addition to this, the prison has provided free training

facilities for an independent gas fitting and plumbing training provider, 'Get Training'. In return for which, prisoners are able to gain access to training courses where they work alongside professionals from outside who are updating their skills. This pioneering approach has enabled prisoners to obtain valuable experience as well as gain useful qualifications.

12. Inadequate short term target-setting for learners existed. Teachers and learners are aware of the longer term targets and goals but short term targets are not being set. In workshop sessions, such as the ICT workshops, learners are not given a clear idea of how long it should take them to do the next task, taking in account the individual learner's abilities. Where targets are being set they are often insufficiently detailed.

Literacy, numeracy and ESOL

Achievement and standards

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

13. Achievement and standards are good. Pass rates are particularly high, for those that complete, for all literacy and numeracy programmes. Pass rates of almost 90% were gained in 2007/08. This reflects a considerable increase from 70% in 2006/07. The pass rate for Adult literacy Level 1 qualifications is very high at 97% and high at 85% for the Level 2. Other pass rates such as the key skill qualifications are also high although these apply to very small numbers of learners.
14. Good progression is made through the different levels of qualifications. Of all learners with literacy and numeracy at entry level, 55% continue onto achieving a Level 1 qualification in literacy and numeracy. Similarly, 40% of the learners who achieve a Level 1 qualification progress onto a Level 2. More notably, 25% of the learners at entry level successfully achieve a Level 2 in adult literacy and or numeracy. Standards of learners' work are satisfactory and in some cases good. Learners take pride in presenting their written work well and work meticulously to present the results of their numeracy tasks in a tidy manner. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

15. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Much good literacy and numeracy learning takes place at HMP Spring Hill. A keen interest from learners is shown in taking up literacy and numeracy courses. Of all inmates that came to the prison in 2007/08, 44% achieved a recognised literacy or numeracy qualification.
16. Learners display high levels of motivation and exercise good peer support during their lessons. They engage particularly well in collaborative work, sharing best practice and often challenging their teachers effectively. Learners take responsibility for their own learning and interact well in class. Learning outcomes are adequately recorded in the learners' records after each session. The quality of teaching is varied but satisfactory overall. In the better lessons, teachers adapt

quickly and effectively to the changes. They use a good variety of appropriate learning styles and maximise learning opportunities by effectively exploring learners' answers.

17. Initial assessment is good and includes a thorough diagnostic test that effectively identifies individual learner's strengths and areas for development. ICT is used effectively during initial assessment. The wide range of literacy and numeracy qualifications available at MP Spring Hill meet the learners' aspirations well. Learners are able to undertake a numeracy qualification at Level 3 and the prison has recently launched a fast monitor programme giving prisoners with very short sentences the opportunity to achieve a level 2 literacy qualification.
18. Good information, advice and guidance is given to all learners during the induction period. Learners receive comprehensive information on both the further training available to them and community work opportunities. Support for learners is generally satisfactory although there is ineffective specialist support for learners with dyslexia. The large proportion of learners who are identified as dyslexic do not have sufficient access to specialist learning materials. This was recognised in the self-assessment report and plans are in place to train a member of staff for this.

Personal development and social integration

Achievement and standards

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

19. Achievement is good on most courses and it has improved since 2006/07. Of the 31 learners who started the budgeting and money management OCN course Level 2, 29 successfully achieved the qualification. Of the 35 starters on the OCN assertiveness course Level 2, 30 were successful in achieving the qualification. Achievement is satisfactory on some longer courses such as art and design and the certificate in learning support, however, some learners have been transferred before being able to complete. The learning and skills department carefully plans its courses to meet the expected lengths of stay. More recently, offenders have been allocated to the prison for a shorter period and the prison regularly reviews its offer of courses to meet these changing needs.
20. Standards of work are satisfactory overall and good in some areas. For example, in the digital photography course learners produced work of a high standard. Learners in both the digital photography and the art and design courses were successful in the recent Koestler competition. Learners on the music technology course develop good music production skills. Through other non accredited activities learners also develop valuable social skills such as verbal communication.
21. On some courses, punctuality is poor and the attendance of some learners is irregular. The learning and skills department recognises this and has put systems in place to improve attendance and punctuality although it is too early to make a judgement on its effectiveness.

Quality of provision

Contributory grade: Satisfactory: Grade 3

22. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good aspects. Classes are effectively planned and well managed. Behaviour in classes is good and any inappropriate behaviour is challenged by staff or by other learners. Good relationships between teachers and learners effectively promote learning. In the better lessons, activities are varied and well planned to engage the interest of the learners. In the less effective lessons activities are dominated by the teacher and activities are insufficiently varied to suit the individual needs and abilities of learners. In these sessions, learners are insufficiently challenged and learning is not regularly checked.
23. Assessment is satisfactory overall. In some courses, work is regularly marked and constructive comments on learners' work help them to make progress. Other sessions routinely use workbooks and worksheets which are completed and assessed as part of session work. Short term target-setting in individual learning plans is often poor. Activities undertaken in sessions are routinely recorded by both tutors and learners in individual learning plans. Constructive comments are made by tutors but individual learning plans are records of activity undertaken rather than evaluative plans for future learning with challenging targets for learners to aim at.
24. Resources are satisfactory. Accommodation is of a good standard and classrooms are generally well equipped. Good use is made of engaging and interesting displays, often of learners' work. Learners have access to good quality IT equipment and specialist software for courses such as digital photography and music technology. Many classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards, however little use is made of these boards and other learning technology in some classes. Some teaching and learning materials are uninspiring and little use is made of classroom based materials to encourage learners to carry out their own research.
25. The learning and skills department is particularly responsive to learners' needs and interests to provide an interesting range of opportunities for the development of personal and social skills. These opportunities effectively contribute to learners' enjoyment and achievement. Social and life skills offer 124 places on courses accredited mainly at Levels 1 and 2. These courses include budgeting and money management, assertiveness, handling and resolving conflict, digital photography, art and design, survival cookery and music technology. These courses are provided by the contracted college. The number and range of courses has increased since 2006/07 and there are now more places for offenders.
26. The prison is creative in its approach to engage learners in social and life skills courses to extend and develop their personal and social skills. For example, one offender is paid to teach an introductory Spanish course and some learners can then progress to a more advanced accredited Spanish course. A committee of offenders was established to organise the "Black History" month. As part of the

project, learners developed valuable communication and negotiation skills. These were effectively displayed in portfolios which contributed to a "working with others" module. Learners develop a high standard of creative writing skills through interesting and varied workshops run by a professional writer and journalist. A "therapy break" from formal classes is used for course development and to offer taster courses to interest new learners. Waiting lists for social and life skills courses are small and well managed. Some classes are offered in the evenings to cater for those in the community during the day. However, for some learners the opportunity to progress from a basic level to a higher level course is not available once they start work in the community before release.

27. Some personal and social skills development is insufficiently monitored and recorded. Offenders develop a wide range of useful skills through informal peer mentoring, work in the prison such as maintaining the prison grounds and acting as prison orderlies. Social and work related skills are also developed in community placements and in employment before release. This is not currently monitored or recorded to add to records of achievement.
28. Support for learners is satisfactory. Induction and initial assessment is thorough and well recorded. It is used effectively to identify learners' needs and refer learners to appropriate courses. At induction learners are given a useful and well produced leaflet to inform them of courses available in the education department. Effective use is made of informal peer support. Peer supporters are given good in-house training for this and prisoners are able to access useful information, advice and guidance from them.

Leadership and management

Good: Grade 2

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade: Good: Grade 2

29. Strong leadership exists with a clear focus on learning and skills at HMP Spring Hill. Good strategic direction is given by the governor and most courses are well managed. Data is thoroughly analysed and well used to develop decision making. Induction for staff and learners is thorough and information, advice and guidance is good. A recent education needs analysis has helped to identify areas for change. Pay is fair and equitable.
30. Senior managers are innovative and entrepreneurial in their approach to curriculum management. Funding streams are well used. There has been particularly good use made of European Social funding (ESF) to provide a well resourced job club to improve provision for employment. The prison has successfully introduced Train to Gain which has encouraged employers to allow prisoners to gain additional qualifications. A novel project to allow prisoners free access to plumbing and gas fitting courses was developed through an outstanding partnership with Northern Gas and the prison has advanced plans to develop a

similar working relationship with a local agricultural college to be able to offer courses to those working in the farms and gardens at the prison.

31. Other outstanding partnerships have been developed to improve provision. There are strong working relationships with Milton Keynes College, Jobcentre Plus and other agencies who help prisoners gain access to further education courses and employment. Particularly good use is made of prisoner's skills, and the prison works well with a wide range of charities and community groups to allow prisoners the opportunity to work outside on projects that help improve their practical and employability skills. Prisoner's skills are also used productively within the prison to help build additional accommodation and facilities such as the new sports hall. Good skills are developed in communication and working with others through well developed initiatives such as the debating society. These skills are often recognised through the accreditation of wider key skills.
32. Quality improvement is overall satisfactory. The self-assessment process is thorough and inclusive and has led to clear action planning. Senior staff are keen to improve their provision and take care to listen and respond to peoples views. Good use is made of feedback from learners and employers and learner focus groups meet regularly and are productive. Milton Keynes College has clear procedures in place to quality monitor the education provision. However, some observations of learning and skills are not well recorded. Insufficient quality monitoring exists of external subcontracted provision and there were no observations undertaken of vocational training in the prison or in the community. Minutes from the monthly quality development group meetings are clearly recorded although they are sometimes poorly attended.
33. Equality of opportunity is good. Learners and staff treat each other with good mutual respect and the prison does not tolerate inappropriate behaviour. Milton Keynes College provides appropriate staff training in equality and diversity. College staff also access the prison service training on equality and diversity. Both education and prison training staff receive a thorough induction in equality of opportunities and additional training is given to update their knowledge and skills. Good promotion and monitoring of equality and diversity takes place. Data is particularly well used and participation and achievements are monitored thoroughly by minority ethnic groups and age. Effective action has been taken to address under participation on vocational training courses and a new music technology course was introduced to help widen participation. Complaints are few and they are dealt with promptly and with sensitivity. Celebrations of different faiths and religious festivals take place. The prison has a pleasant and well used Buddha grove, and Black history month is celebrated annually with activities led by prisoners to raise money for charity. A clear and impartial process for the allocation of prisoners to work and courses exists, and waiting lists are low. However, physical access to many learning and skills activities is restricted for those with limited mobility and insufficient monitoring of equality of opportunities with the external subcontracted provision takes place.

What learners like:

- 'Good support from employers'
- 'Support to get into employment'
- 'Very helpful staff'
- 'Being listened to'
- 'Better than other prisons I've been to'

What learners think could improve:

- 'There's not enough to do – particularly for short term offenders'
- 'Some of the teaching is boring'
- 'Nothing at all'